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# The Task for Conservatism

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THE WORLD has heard a great deal in the last few years about "plans". For the most part these have been mechanical schemes for making some economic system work, and they are not worth discussing until it is decided whether anyone wants the system to work. This basic decision involves another kind of plan—a moral plan, defining the type and quality of national life which is desired. It is a purpose of this essay to point out that the existing régime (capitalism in economics and plutocracy in politics) cannot offer such a plan, since it cannot afford to call attention to its own moral and cultural results. It must concentrate, in good times, on its financial results; and in bad times it must keep as mum as possible. There are two groups, however, who can offer a basic moral plan, and now is the time for them to do so. One group is the communists, who are seizing their chance; the other group is the conservatives, who are not. It is the further purpose of this essay to call attention to the value, both moral and practical, of what conservatism can offer.

There is no other concept so discredited in modern America as the concept of conservatism. This is not because the American people have looked upon conservatism and found it bad; it is because the word has been perverted, has been taken to describe something from which the people have at last, and justly, turned with dismay. For seventy years, a "conservative" has meant a supporter of Big Business, of the politics of plutocracy: the one type of politics for which no honest praise has been found. According to this view, Mark Hanna was a conservative; Colonel George Harvey was a conservative; and so, ludicrously enough, is Mr. Harry Sinclair. It may seem vain quixotism to try to rescue a word that has been linked with such names; yet the rescue must be made, for it is not just a word, but a vital concept, that is at stake.

If it were true that America has nothing more important to conserve than the right of the money power to loot a continent, then the country might as well perish now as later, and no wise man would cross the street to save it. But luckily this is quite untrue. There is another, and an older, America than that symbolized by Mr. Wiggin, an America that lacks self-consciousness because it has been so long ignored that it is even beginning to ignore itself. That America must be redefined. Whether it can then assert itself in the struggle for power remains to be seen; but the conservative believes that the effort is worth making. He affirms that there was much virtue in America in the days before it was sold to a group of gamblers and promoters. Above all, he affirms that it is still possible to build the sort of society we want, assuming we can be raised to the dignity of wanting anything at all, except "prosperity". There is the issue: Is modern America, or is any united section of modern America, capable of desiring and defining a society based on principles rather than on opportunism, on a moral image of what it wishes the life of man to be rather than on a more or less regulated scramble for possessions? If the answer is "yes", then the desired state can be approximated. If the answer is "no", then the future of America can be outlined today. But it is scarcely worth outlining.

There is a large element of truth in deterministic theories of history. If a society is morally inert, if it is not consciously trying to conform to a chosen pattern, then it will tend to function mechanically, and its future will be as predictable as the workings of any other machine. The difference between a moral agent and a machine is that the moral agent has choice. Man has the power to make himself a moral agent, but he need not use that power. If his self-awareness (his consciousness of his own desires and motives) be torpid, he will become the next thing to a machine. He will tend to turn into the "economic man", a sort of highest common denominator of human weaknesses; and a society composed chiefly of such units will have the minimum of moral will, of true freedom of choice. It will tend to obey "economic law". In politics it will be dominated by a little group whose cupidity is abnormally intense, and who will therefore become the ruling class.

This is not a theory of what might happen to an imaginary society; it is a description of what has happened to the United States. The United States was created, and its form of government chosen, by men who were in fair agreement on two main points. The first point was that the widest possible distribution of property is a prerequisite for a free society. To some of the Fathers, such as Jefferson, this meant agrarianism, a world in which as many people as possible should live off their own land, doing the minimum of buying and selling with the outside world. To others, such as John Adams, this meant an interdependent community of farmers and of moderately well-off merchants and business men, with the government holding the balance between the two and preventing dangerous accumulations of wealth in a few hands. All were agreed, however, that a wide diffusion of property was the basis for a good state. And the second point of agreement was that unrestricted democracy made for irresponsibility of government. Jefferson, to be sure, thought the vote could safely be given to all the free farmers in the agrarian state he foresaw; and probably few men, then or now, would disagree with him. But the Northern leaders, who knew that their part of the country would not grow into an agrarian state, were for restricting the vote to people whose property gave them an active, watchful interest in public affairs. And this view was shared by the more realistic Southerners. Madison, for instance, saw that "in future times a great majority of the people will not only be without land, but any other sort of property". And he correctly concluded that if these people were given the vote, the probable result would be, not that they would win rights and privileges for themselves, but that "they would become the tools of opulence and ambition".

Here, then, are two primary doctrines on which the United States was founded. It was thought that a state built on those doctrines would have, and might preserve, the maximum of freedom and opportunity. It was thought that a wide diffusion of property (with its corollary, the discouragement of too great accumulations in a few hands) made for enterprise, for family responsibility, and in general for institutions that fit man's nature and that give a chance for a desirable life. The founders of the United States, in other words, had a moral purpose, a conscious plan to foster a certain way of life because it seemed good rather than because it seemed the most efficient way of making money. If it had been suggested to the Fathers that the most rapid exploitation of North America could be made by depriving more and more people of real property and giving more and more people the vote, so that as many as possible might become "the tools of opulence and ambition"—the Fathers would probably have admitted the truth of the suggestion, but denied its relevance to their task. Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened. The vote was distributed, property was restricted, and in the era following the Civil War "the people" became not only the tools but the prey of opulence and ambition—whose prime agent was the Republican Party, with the Democratic Party as understudy to read the same lines when the chief was sick, or in jail.

There are four main reasons why the United States lost her moral purpose and became the victim of economic determinism. The first was that the normal temptation to sacrifice a social ideal to the scramble for money was intensified by the wealth which the new country uncovered, and then doubled or trebled once again by the industrial revolution, which lifted the rewards for a successful raid on society to dangerous heights. The second was that the culture based on diffused property was not given time to strike deep roots in America before it was attacked by the barbarism based on monopoly. The third was that Americans were rarely restrained by a religious motive. The United States is a Protestant country, founded when Protestantism was already in decline. This religion could still provide comfort and support to the humble life, but as a barrier for buccaneers it did not exist. The money-pirates might pay their respects to religion by founding theological schools after the damage was done; but in the hour of temptation Christianity was as far from their thoughts as Buddhism. And the fourth reason was that the United States had become a political democracy just at the time when the temptation to plunder was growing irresistible. As opulence swelled and ambition became more turgid, their tools were multiplied by the millions.

One must not flatter the plutocrats by assuming that this was the result of a plot. The spread of democracy was a disaster which played into their hands, but which they had lacked the foresight to promote. It came because in much of the new West there was (for a brief period) a real social democracy, which naturally brought political democracy in its train. Then adult manhood suffrage spread eastward (into country where, since there was no social democracy, it did not belong), with the result that at the time of maximum temptation to call all rules off, to forget all social ideals in a mad plunge for millions, the way was cleared for the rule of the rich. Opulence could no longer be restrained by an alert minority which, for reasons of self-interest or morals, wished to preserve the original

American plan. "Democracy and plutocracy are the same thing under the two aspects of wish and actuality, theory and practice." The exception to this rule would be a country too poor, or too stably settled into a system of small property-holdings, to breed money-pirates. The United States was not poor, and it was not yet stably settled into anything.

Before the plutocracy could come into its own, however, it was necessary to destroy an intrenched landed interest, the leadership of which was provided by the South. Modern finance-capitalism demands the sacrifice of every other economic interest to itself. The agrarians refused to make this sacrifice voluntarily. The Civil War was fought to see whether they should make it against their wills, and the answer was that they should.

From 1865 to 1914 American capitalism had its own way, growing both huge and unseemly. In the latter year it was ready to come of age; it was ready to stop borrowing foreign money for the exploitation of North America, and to begin lending money for the exploitation of the rest of the world; it was ready to turn America from a debtor to a creditor power; it was ready, in other words, to give the *coup de grâce* to American agriculture. Up to this time the farmer, though not encouraged to get above himself, was still a necessary part of the system. The United States was a borrowing country; Great Britain, the great lending power, had sacrificed her agriculture to industrial expansion, and was glad to receive payment in food. So the farmer was encouraged to grow a surplus for export. And so long as America contained a large class of farmers who nominally owned their own land, there still seemed to be some point of contact between the country of the day and the country of the Founding Fathers. But this vanished when the United States became a creditor nation. The most important remaining class of small property-owners became an anachronism.

The change was hastened and made more dramatic by the World War; but in any case it would have come in a few years. There was no further need of food exports to pay interest on debts; in fact, the financiers would have liked to import food by way of receiving interest on loans. But since it was not thought expedient to let the farmers starve in their fields, like the sacred animals of India, the domestic market was reserved for them. So instead of starving they went bankrupt, and would probably have been removed in some decorous fashion (in order that the United States might become a money-lending, food-importing nation on the British model), had not the whole system collapsed under Mr. Hoover.

Before turning to the opportunities made by that collapse, I call attention to the speed with which, during the years culminating in "Coolidge prosperity", private property was disappearing. As late as 1896, Bryan could plead the cause of the free farmer and "the merchant at the cross-roads store"; and there were enough free farmers and cross-roads merchants to give the money-men their worst fright since Gettysburg. But by 1928 the farmers belonged to the mortgage-holders and the merchants belonged to the chain-store companies. And hardly anybody objected. So long as a great many people were prosperous, nothing else mattered. The farmers could grumble all they chose; the noise died harmlessly on their prairies. And if here and there a shopkeeper objected to being squeezed out by the chain-stores or the mail-order houses, he was asked if he had never heard of progress.

Instead of growing into a country with the widest possible diffusion of property, America was on her way to becoming a country with the smallest. Fewer and fewer Americans owned anything more permanent than their clothes, or than one of Mr. Insull's bonds. Absence of ownership, more and more widespread dependence on a precarious wage, was becoming the main feature of society. And yet this was popularly known as a system of private property—by contrast with Russia, where people own nothing but their personal possessions and are deprived of the comfort of Mr. Insull's bonds. This confusion between private property, and the freedom for private enterprise which makes such property impossible, has been noted by Mr. Chesterton. "A pickpocket", he writes, "is obviously a champion of private enterprise. But it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that a pickpocket is a champion of private property."

## II

I come now to the America of today. The point of all I have said so far is to suggest that the system which broke down under Mr. Hoover had nothing in common with the system which was created by the Fathers of the United States. It was not the old American effort which failed, but a modern American swindle: a system of private property under which scarcely anyone owns anything except his hat; a system of democracy under which (in our population-centres) scarcely anyone has political power unless he buys it; a system of finance under which the richest nation on earth, capable of supplying 95% of its own wants (as well as a lavish surplus to exchange for the remaining 5%), is unable to distribute its abundance to its own victims.

In other words, it is not something precious that has grown sick, but something detestable. It is therefore pertinent to ask whether we really want to patch it together again, or whether, now that fate has shattered it to bits, we might not try to build something nearer to the heart's desire. If we patch the old system together, merely depriving it of its worst features, we shall have deprived it of the very things that made its friends love it, and we may find ourselves left with a system that nobody wants.

If, on the other hand, we try to build something new, the first step is to create a moral image of the kind of country we want America to become. Then we can adapt our institutions accordingly. The communists have created such an image. It is their great strength that they know the sort of world they want to build, and that they believe it to be good. The liberals are busy collecting the pieces of Humpty Dumpty and trying to fit them into a less gruesome shape. The obvious task for conservatives is to redefine the historic purpose of America, to scotch forever the association of this purpose with the obscenities of Big Business, and to show how it can be attained in politics.

The liberal Administration, now struggling with the double task of recovery and reform, has never made clear what sort of country it wants to create. But if we judge by results to date, the New Deal will be finance-capitalism with its rewards more fairly distributed, and its knavery curtailed. Compared to what America has recently endured, this is a reassuring prospect. But what lies back of it? Is there an economic philosophy behind the NRA? More important, is there a moral philosophy? Does the Administration know what it wants America to be? Or would it be satisfied to see the country merely prosperous, so long as that prosperity was fairly distributed? If the latter is the case, then the whole programme is crisis-legislation—a first class effort to get out of a bad hole and to insure that human cupidity does not plunge us into a deeper hole in the near future. If this is what the New Deal means, one can only say that it is a very great improvement on the Old Deal. It is an intelligent effort to steer while drifting with the economic current, instead of bumping inanely from rock to rock. But the important point is that such a programme follows the economic current—whether consciously, because approving it, or unconsciously, because of a failure to analyze it, makes no difference to the result. And that result will be an approach to the property-less, and hence servile, state. It may, for a long period, be a prosperous state, in which case the servitude may be lightly borne. But the one certainty is that if present economic trends are merely directed, and are not frustrated, the means of production will get into the hands of fewer and fewer people, the monopolists of credit will have a lien even on those people, property in any real sense will almost cease to exist, the United States (whether rich or poor) will be a nation of wage-slaves whose livings are at the mercy of finance. This is the end, in fact the meaning, of capitalism in economics and plutocracy in politics.

Already, under the NRA, which lets the industrialist escape the anti-trust laws, the little man is being squeezed out by his rich competitor. This is the logic of "efficiency", of prosperity accepted as an end in itself. In a capitalist state, with a monopoly of credit in the hands of finance, if our goal is the highest possible standard of living, measured in terms of income, then the system to bring us most quickly to that goal is the servile state. The only problem is whether we can reach the goal quickly enough under a sham democracy, which is really a plutocracy, or whether in the last stages it will be more convenient to substitute an open dictatorship.

In the development of such a state as I have just described, there is no moral element whatever. The institutions of society are not chosen because they will foster a good way of life; they are chosen because they will foster a larger national income. The assumption is that if people get enough money they will find themselves, or possibly buy themselves, a good life. The conservative holds this to be a false assumption. He holds that a people living under a dictatorship or a bogus democracy, having none of the responsibilities of public life and none of the dignity or freedom that comes with real property–that such a people, though it draws a rich wage regularly, is being fobbed off with bread and circuses and cheated of the conditions that tend to give moral value to life. If the choice were between such slavery and the slavery of poverty, there might be no argument. But that is not the choice presented to modern America.

The communist would probably accept much of my criticism of the capitalist servile state. He would surely agree that there is no moral plan back of such a state, no provision for a social order which might foster a good life as well as an increasing national income. And the communist would deny that a similar charge can be brought against his own plan. For though he too would build a servile state (in the sense of a propertyless state) he would have a moral end in view. In the place of servitude to finance he would put servitude to the state conceived as trustee for the common good. In the place of a citizen receiving his bread and circuses at the pleasure of anonymous finance, he would put a citizen receiving his share of the fruits of the community's effort, a citizen with a sense of being a part of society and not merely a pensioner, a citizen formed by institutions and by an education aimed at giving him a sense of the value of the community to which he must subject himself. Whether the communist can implement this plan does not concern me here. Assuming that he could, if I had to choose between servitude to finance-capitalism and servitude to a communist state, I would gladly choose the latter. But it is my purpose to suggest that a third choice is possible for America.

The third choice (and the only other choice, in my opinion) is to return to an ideal which was an important part of the plan on which this nation was founded: the ideal of the widest possible distribution of property. It is clear that since the Civil War the whole trend of American development has been away from this ideal. If the trend has gone so far that the ideal has become alien to the majority of Americans, then it is too late for a successful conservative effort. If Americans have come to believe that a wage is the same thing as freedom; if they prefer such a wage, with its appearance of security, to the obvious dangers and responsibilities of ownership, then they cannot be saved from the servitude that awaits them. Above all, if they have reached the point where the lure of a higher income is greater than the lure of independence with its attendant risks, the conservative plan will make no appeal. Those who laugh at the idea of conservatism in America, asking derisively whether we think we can turn back the clock, must believe that Americans are far gone in servility. I do not share this opinion. Americans have drifted into their present state because they have been offered no alternative.

There has been no conservative Party in America since the Civil War. There has been no Party with steady principles, no Party seeking to preserve a certain way of life and to create institutions suitable to that way of life. There have merely been two Parties seeking power, seeking to adapt themselves with the least friction to the economic drift, seeking above all to maintain the fraudulent pretence that they stand for two divergent views of politics. With such leaders what could the country do but submit to economic determinism, drifting down the line of least resistance, which was the line of unhampered capitalist development? We were so rich that not all the swindles in hell could ruin us, and so we came to feel that the swindles didn't really matter very much. Among the farmer-victims to the system, there was enough discontent to furnish occasional real issues; but the victims were in a minority and so the system flourished. No one wanted to hear it criticized; no one wanted to be reminded of the nation's historic purpose. But the policy of drift led to an ugly bump in 1929, and the country is ready now to hear criticism. It hears plenty of root-and-branch criticism from the Left, which would scrap the whole works for communism. It hears plenty of criticism of details from the Centre, which would mend the system, correct it, and then set it on its way again. It hears strangely little from the Right, which should be taking this last chance to win backing for its principles and its policy.

The root of a real conservative policy for the United States must be redistribution of property. But before the conservative can preach that policy he must make clear that he does not think of property as an excuse for the strong man to loot his neighbours and make a property-less nation, but as the basis for the kind of life he wants to see in America. Obviously, he must admit that property in his sense cannot be held by everyone. But if it is so widely held as to make ownership (of land, machine-shop, cross-roads store, or of a share in some necessarily huge machine) the normal thing, which sets the social tone, then property will make for stability in family and community life, for responsibility, for enterprise, for the many virtues whose names have long been taken to cover the abuses of an unclean monopoly.

Such a distribution of property is not in the line of economic drift. It must be produced artificially and then guarded by favourable legislation; for the property-system, in a highly industrialized and mechanized world, is self-destructive; the logic of economic development is that a society based on private property should turn into a property-less state. But such development takes place only where there is no human will to thwart it. The thwarting is quite practicable, granted the will. But the will must be a moral will; it can never be a mere economic urge toward the largest possible income. Such an urge appears to be all on the side of the servile state. To oppose such an urge appears to be uneconomic. I am by no means convinced that this is true; but for the moment I accept it as true. I am willing to grant that the return to a system of diffused property will cost money, that the nation could be made more rich at the price of an increasing wage-slavery. Nevertheless, I believe that such a return would be welcomed by a large body of Americans. I believe that not only among the farmers and the remaining owners of little businesses, small stores, and factories, but among the large expropriated public, there is a desire for ownership and responsibility, a hate of the huge impersonal combine or chain. Hitherto, the American has been told that this hate is a sign of backwoods mentality, which is a lie. He has been told that progress and prosperity were dependent on Big Business, which is another lie. He has been told that these weird economic growths would not only make him wealthy but happy and wise, which is the biggest lie of all.

It is the duty of conservatives to remind the country that these things are lies, and to keep before the country the quite simple issue, which has recently been put in a few words by Mr. Belloc: "Either we restore property, or we restore slavery, to which we have already gone more than half way in our industrialized societies." We must keep this choice in people's minds—this choice, and the knowledge that there is no middle course. Either the whole present development of finance-capitalism must be checked (and for moral rather than economic reasons), or that capitalism will go its way until property has become a myth and the nation is enslaved by the credit monopoly. The local manager of a chain-store may congratulate himself because he is getting more as a salary than he could ever earn when he owned his shop. But the salary depends on the distant workings of finance; it may be cut tomorrow if there is a panic on the London stock exchange; it may be abolished when the next slump liquidates the next unbearable pile of debts. The man is a slave, though he owns two cars and has an income weekly that a French farmer does not see in a year. He may think himself a capitalist and buy bonds in the latest sky-scraper; but the death of some pseudo-Kreuger can turn those bonds into paper. The man is a slave because he owns nothing of which the worth, or the return to him, is dependent on his personal effort, nothing from which he could find salvation if men whose names are unknown and whose faces he has never seen should happen to ruin him. He has not even the dignity that communism would give, of belonging to a state with a respect-worthy purpose, a state whose demands are related to, and justified by, that purpose. He is riff-raff. He is one of millions of anonymous servants of finance. He is not even important enough to have been given a number. His one distinction (which he owes to other men) is that because modern technology has made goods as abundant as leaves of grass, the reward of his servitude (between slumps) is not a bowl of rice but a superbly lavish mess of pottage. It is only the size of the mess that distinguishes him from the *fellaheen* of Roman Egypt.

Such a man is the type-citizen of a world in which finance-capitalism has come to its full development.

And the next logical step, having reached this pass, is communism. For in a world where ownership is more and more centralized, it will not be long before that centralization is made complete, and at the same time made sane. There is some point in having all the means of production owned by the community, but there is no point in having them all owned by the Mellon family. There is a moral argument for communism; there is a moral argument for private property; there is none for capitalism as we see it today. It is not the result of a plan; no man was ever cursed with such an abominable dream. It came to pass because our avarice got the better of us, defeating the purpose for which this nation was made. Through a dreary time our one service to the values we think we cherish has been to take their names in vain. For that we are punished by seeing those names become a jibe for cynics. Because we never ceased praising freedom while busily at work on the chains by which finance could bind us, because we boasted of self-government while perfecting our political machines, because we jailed "Reds" for attacking private property while we applauded the cornering of a continent by a few thousand men—it is hard to use these good words today in any but a derisive sense. Yet the conservative must use them. He must redeem them, and he must remind Americans that here is their heritage and that it is almost lost.

It may not be easy to recapture that heritage; but it is worth trying, especially since there is no standing still. There is no stability to mere capitalism. If we like the concentration of ownership, if we prefer wages to property, communism is our goal. A régime of Bigger and Bigger Business will have every vice of communism but not one of its virtues. It will make us property-less, but without the safeguard that in bad times we at least share equally; it will make us slaves, but not the slaves of a state with a moral purpose, only the slaves of a man with an itch for money. We must choose; we cannot stay where we are.

If we choose communism, it is easy to see how we can set about getting our end. In fact, we would hardly have to set about it at all. We could sit tight and the end would come to us. The present system is doomed, and if nothing is done to interfere with blind determinism the name of that doom is communism. But the task of the conservative is precisely to find how to interfere with blind determinism. And an important part of that task is to persuade those who are temperamentally his allies that man is not condemned to push forward if he happens to hate what is ahead of him, that it is not true that the one thing man can never do is the thing he did yesterday. If this be admitted—and with it the possibility of choice, and hence of morality, in politics—there is a basis for conservatism.

## III

It is the purpose of this essay to define the task for conservatism, not the means by which conservatism should act. However, since there is a common belief that conservatives (in the true, not the Big-business, sense) are romantic dreamers about the past, I shall close with a few practical suggestions.

The first prerequisite for a return to a system of private property is that the state should reassume its basic sovereign power: the power to issue and recall money and credit. At present that power has been given to a private monopoly, chiefly on the plea that it is too important to trust to the politician. I feel no call to praise the typical modern politician, but it is fair to point out that his repute is no lower than that of the typical modern banker. Obviously, before we can build a decent state on any pattern, we must find a way to choose politicians we can trust. I shall come to that problem in a moment. But the root problem is that of finance. We talk of Big Business, but the essence of the modern concentration of property is not concentration in the hands of the industrialist, but concentration in the hands of the financier. Finance, not industry, is the present owner of America—which is natural enough, since finance has a monopoly of the national credit. It is too much to expect finance, possessed of that monopoly, to help us in undoing its logical results. But if the state takes to itself the credit-power (which is far more decisive than the power to issue currency), it will be in a position not only to redistribute property but to make sure that property does not re-accumulate in a few hands. It seems possible that the present Administration may be led on to break the monopoly of finance. If so, it will have paved the way for a restoration of historic America.

I said above that I would admit, for the sake of the argument, that the restoration of property might be "uneconomic". I made the admission because even if that were true, such a restoration would be worth the cost. But I do not believe it to be true. In the Power Age (the result of the new industrial revolution since 1914) a state which controls its own credit-system can go a long way toward restoring private property and still produce enough goods to create a common wealth greater than has yet been known. If the property-system can produce abundance, it is not sensible to combat it on the ground that the servile state can produce super-abundance. It is probable that in a distributist America a large group would choose to be truly agrarian, to live almost wholly on the resources of its own land. I believe that such a group would be a health-giving body within the state. But I do not believe that the majority which chose to live in the world of modern industrial economy need be impoverished by the prohibition of giant concentrations of property and power. A propertied America, with control over its own credit and hence over its own real wealth, has the natural and technological resources to produce goods beyond any previous dream of man. Its problem is no longer how to create wealth, but how to distribute it; and that problem could be met by a government that controlled its own finance. Those who deny this are still living in the nineteenth century, where they wrongly suppose the conservative to have set his heart. The second prerequisite for a revival of private property is a government which will not sell the country straight back to its recent owners. I believe the American tradition supplies the answer to this problem as well. Self-government is an American instinct, and self-government must be our end; but the founders of our country were too sane to believe this end could be reached by giving the vote to property-less, uneducated, and unstable masses of men and women. For our sins we now find the country peopled with large numbers of such men and women, and the government of our big cities shows how well they use the vote. They would rebel, and rightly, if it were proposed merely to deprive them of the vote, while continuing the present economic drift. But if we began by breaking the monopoly of finance and by taking effective steps to make the ownership of real property the normal status of the adult man and woman, we could then make voting a privilege to be attained in one of two ways: by ownership, or by proof of some knowledge of history and politics. People who cannot qualify in either of these ways are as likely today as they were in the eighteenth century to be " the tools of opulence and ambition". If the voting body contains a large minority of such tools, how can we hope to frustrate the men who own the tools?

"Democracy and plutocracy are the same thing." The point was made by Plato and by many of the Fathers of the American Constitution. It has recently been restated by Spengler. There is no excuse in the history of great nations for denying the statement. If we would be rid of plutocracy we must be rid of the system that breeds it. It is of course our privilege to plan, and strive, for a country of responsible, instructed men and women, where all would have the vote because all could meet the reasonable tests. The fact that no people has achieved such a state does not prove it impossible. But that is our end; we shall never reach it by claiming to be there already. The conservative asks that we admit the facts of our present plight, and act accordingly. If we reject the plea, insisting with vacant pride that we are now a nation of free, stable, property-owning men and women, a proof of democracy's triumph, then we shall soon have the government that mental weaklings deserve. But we shall not like it.

# Irving Babbitt

## PAUL ELMER MORE

IT IS not an easy thing, with the cold page of print in mind, to write of a friend, a very close friend, and it is only with reluctance that I have acceded to the request to undertake such a task. And there was a special reason for hesitating in this case. Babbitt was an author and a teacher, and in these capacities is known to a larger and a smaller circle; others may estimate—indeed Professor Mercier has already estimated—the value of his books as well as I could do, or better; and of his astonishing manner and power in the lecture room, his pupils, many of them now holding prominent places in the academic world, can speak from a knowledge which I do not possess. But he was a talker too, greater in that vein, I believe, than as a teacher, greater, I know, than as an author. And it is just of his genius in the give and take of conversation that I am qualified, by long association and by a fundamental sympathy of mind not incompatible with clashing differences, to write as probably no one else can do. Yet a record of the spoken word without its intonation and the accompanying gesture leaves it but a dead thing, and a reported argument is likely to lose its point unless the second party to the discussion brings himself into the scene to a degree that may seem egotistic.

My acquaintance with Babbitt began in the autumn of 1892, when I came to Cambridge from the West to prosecute my study of Sanskrit and Pâli. Babbitt was then twenty-six or seven years old. He had graduated from Harvard, had taught for a time in Montana, and had then spent a year in Paris working in the same languages with Sylvain Lévi. We two formed the whole of the advanced class under Professor Lanman, and naturally were thrown much together. I can well remember our first meeting in Lanman's marvellously equipped library. Babbitt was rather above the average height, powerfully built, with the complexion of radiant health. But it was his eyes that caught and held one's attention. They were of a dark, not pure blue, and even then, though of a lustre that dimmed somewhat in later years, had in repose the withdrawn look of one much given to meditation. He had a way of gazing downwards or forwards or anywhere rather than into the face of his interlocutor, in a manner which could never be described as timid or shifty, but which gave often the impression of remoteness, as if the individual before him were lost in some general view of life or some question of fundamental principles which might be occupying his mind. But if the unlucky individual thought to escape into that remoteness from the consequences of a rash statement or logical fallacy, he was likely to be caught up by a swift direct glance that seemed to shoot out tentacles, as it were, into his very soul. At such moments that restless energy of Babbitt's, which was wont to work itself off in walking or by pacing back and forth as he talked, would appear to be gathered together, holding his body in an attitude of tense rigidity. The effect —I am speaking of his early years of combat—was startling, sometimes almost terrific, as if in an evening ramble under the shadow of familiar trees one were brought up sharply by the gleam of watching eyes from a form crouching ready to spring. One such instance I may recall. We were strolling up what was then known as North Avenue, engaged in debate over I cannot remember what matter, when suddenly he stopped short, faced about upon me, and, with both hands rigidly clenched, ejaculated: "Good God, man, are you a Jesuit in disguise?" The words may sound flat enough in the repeating; but as they were hurled out, with the accompanying gesture and glance of indignation, they made an impression not to be forgotten. I have never been able to answer the question satisfactorily.

The old North Avenue and Brattle Street, both thoroughfares at that time leading out into the open country, are particularly associated in my memory with these talks. Babbitt was always delicately sensitive to the charms of New England scenery, and in such places as Squam Lake and Dublin, N. H., where later I visited him in the long vacations, he would manifest a romantic love of nature which might surprise those who know only the classical and rather austere side of his intellect. But again, in those Cambridge days, owing to the weather or the hour we would meet indoors, sometimes in his room, oftener in my own narrow quarters. And I can see, almost hear, him now as he used to pace back and forth the few steps from wall to wall, arguing vehemently on whatever question might be broached, or recounting the adventures of his youth (a strange and mixed experience), pausing at every fourth or fifth turn to take huge draughts from the water jug on my washstand, and pretty well emptying it in the course of an evening. I cannot recall the range of topics discussed–no doubt in part they were those which young men have been worrying over since the beginning of human speech–nor can I recapture the excitement of hearing the world and the destinies of man tossed about in thesis and counter-thesis after a fashion quite new to me. Literature was one of the fields in which he exercised his dialectic, naturally; and what remains with me now is chiefly the fact that his views were already formed and fixed. My taste, on the contrary, was in a state of transition. I had brought with me to Cambridge a mind steeped in Heine and Novalis and the Schlegels, and though my enthusiasm for these German dreamers had cooled before I met him and I was feeling my way towards more classical standards, there was enough of the old virus left in me to call out all the vigour of his critical powers. I am afraid that I held for him then the place afterwards occupied by Rousseau, who in those days, so far as I can remember, was never mentioned, but first comes to the front in the comparison with Bacon in *Literature and the American College*, one of Babbitt's best and most finished pieces of writing and an epitome of all he was to fight for in later years. Of the classics Horace, I think, was at that time the poet most frequently referred to or quoted by him. And at the frosty touch of that Lord of Common Sense the exquisites of romanticism would shrivel up and drift away in the winds. How he came to his love and mastery of Roman and Greek poets, I do not know. According to his own account, the taste was born in him. The astonishing fact, as I look back over the years, is that he seems to have sprung up, like

Minerva, fully grown and fully armed. No doubt he made vast additions to his knowledge and acquired by practice a deadly dexterity in wielding it, but there is something almost appalling in the immobility of his central ideas. He has been criticized for this and ridiculed for harping everlastingly on the same thoughts, as if he lacked the faculty of assimilation and growth. On the contrary, I am inclined to believe that the weight of his influence can be attributed in large measure to just this tenacity of mind. In a world visibly shifting from opinion to opinion and, as it were, rocking on its foundation, here was one who never changed or faltered in his grasp of principles, whose latest word can be set beside his earliest with no apology for inconsistency, who could always be depended on. It will be remembered that Socrates was charged with the same monotony of ideas, and his retort to the sophist might have been uttered by Babbitt: Why, my dear young man, not only am I always talking in the same manner, but I am forever talking about the same things. It comes down to one's conception of truth: is truth something fixed which can be discovered, and when discovered is it of a nature to demand a man's unwavering allegiance; or is truth too, like opinion, only a glimpse of some momentary aspect of the flux, no sooner beheld than lost in the flowing stream of impressions?

And not only had Babbitt at an early age—how early I do not know—reached these settled convictions, but at least from the beginning of our acquaintance they were knit together into a system by logical bonds which were perfectly clear to his mind, so clear, indeed, that he tended to take them for granted as equally obvious to others. The consequence to his writing was not wholly fortunate. For one thing, it gave a kind of rotary movement instead of a regular progression to his books. A rhetorician would say that he did not know how to manage his paragraphs. Instead of finishing one link of his argument and then proceeding to the next and so on from premise to conclusion, he is somewhat inclined to crowd his whole thesis, at least implicitly, into each single paragraph, so that the book, despite the inexhaustible variety of his illustrations, gives the impression of endless repetition. That is undoubtedly a fault of construction, and has stood in the way of his full recognition as a thinker. But it is a rhetorical fault only, owing to a failure to put himself as a writer into the mind of his reader; the constructive faculty was really there; he had reasoned out his position step by step, but, having done this for himself, he would forget that his reader had not been present at the process, and he would pitch into his exposition at any point—beginning, middle, or ending.

And this is one reason why he seemed to me more effective as a talker than as a writer. Here again the uninstructed or uninterested listener might criticize his conversation as displaying the same lack of method as his books. And I can remember the complaint of a distinguished but rather commonplace historian of Harvard that my friend's conversation had no sense at all, being a jumble of terms with no definite meaning for him or for anyone else, and of dogmatic assertions which severally had no logical basis and collectively no sequence. But for the sympathetic listener there needed to be no such difficulty. By a question interposed here and there, or by an occasional sharp contradiction, it was easy to bring him back to the order of his thoughts and to lay bare the whole inner working of his mind from axiomatic principles to inevitable conclusions.

I am trying to describe Babbitt's talk at its highest, when the subject brought out all his resources, and to show how, in the give and take of argument and by the need of defending his position against an antagonism not incompatible with large agreement, certain qualities came to the light which many readers fail to detect in his published works. But I would not leave the impression that he was addicted to preaching in season or out of season; there might be something of the prophet in his tone when grave moral issues were raised, never of the prig; he might reduce his antagonist physically to a rag by the pertinacity of his attack, he was never a bore. His ordinary intercourse, as a matter of fact, was notable for flashes of wit and strokes of keen repartee that could set the table on a roar, and in his earlier days might be seasoned by touches of almost Rabelaisian humour which would never be guessed from the reticences of his later manner.

Literature and life were much in his thought; but the staple of his more serious talk, owing chiefly to his own inclination but partly, no doubt, to provocation from my side, was ethical and religious. This remained true to the end; in those days, however, the discussions were coloured by his, or I may say our, special studies. From the beginning, Babbitt was drawn to the Buddhistic side of Hinduism rather than to the Brahmanic, and to the Pâli language, in which the most authentic record of Buddha's teaching is preserved, rather than to the Sanskrit. There was something in this corresponding to his classical taste in works of the imagination and to his rejection of romanticism. Primarily what attracted him to the Pâli texts may have been the clarity and concreteness of the style (which the uninitiated may best feel in De Lorenzo's Italian version of *I Discorsi di Buddho*), as compared with the elusive mistiness of the Sanskrit, particularly of the *Upanishads*. With this clarity, almost hardness, of expression went the ethical doctrine of Buddha. Here I am unable to say whether Babbitt favoured the doctrine, the *dhamma*, because it fell in with conclusions at which he had already arrived by independent reflection, or whether his ethical ideas were largely the result of reading in the Pâli. Of the two alternatives I guess that the former is the truer, though in either case the important point is the native affinity of his mind with that of the Oriental sage. This comes out in a footnote to his criticism of the Arcadian dream of Rousseau in his first publication:

> The greatest of vices according to Buddha is the lazy yielding to the impulses of temperament (*pamâda*); the greatest virtue (*appamâda*) is the opposite of this, the awakening from the sloth and lethargy of the senses, the constant exercise of the active will. The last words of the dying Buddha to his disciples was an exhortation to practise this virtue unremittingly.

That was the lesson Babbitt had for the world when I first knew him; it is the heart and essence of what he inculcated in book after book, to the discomfiture and disgust of his hostile critics; it is what he was hoping to confirm by a translation and exposition of the *Dhammapada* which he was preparing when his health failed.

On the other hand, I had started my Oriental studies with a predilection for the Sanskrit literature of the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gîta*, and the Vedantic theosophy. To this I was brought in part, I suppose, by the romantic virus not yet expelled from my system, though a deeper attraction was in the mythological elements of the Vedânta, which, in fact, range from an absolute pantheism to a grotesque polytheism, but which might lead, as I think I even then felt instinctively, to a more concrete monotheism. However that may be, it is easy to see that here was a situation to call out all Babbitt's fighting powers in debate; and nobly did he respond to the summons. I would never acknowledge defeat, but I was often left prostrate on the field of battle.

This Harvard period extended over three years, the first when we were students together, the second when he returned as instructor in French after an interval of a year at Williams, and the third in 1899-1900 when I was there again doing some special work for Lanman. It is a digression but a fact worthy of note that, though Babbitt began—and ended—his teaching career at Harvard in the modern field, his heart at first was set on working in the classics. I often wonder what might have been the consequences if the Classical Department had not rejected him at the beginning and continued systematically *more suo* to ignore him. What might have happened if he had spent his energies on expounding a literature to which he could have given his positive allegiance instead of one which he studied chiefly to annihilate? His diagnosis of our modern ailments would have lost something of its fervour and scientific completeness; but the exemplary wisdom of Greece might have been brought back to us alive, and the teaching of the classics might have been made once more a discipline in the humanities. I may be pardoned for adding here my complaint that a very great teacher, perhaps even the greatest this country has ever produced, was overlooked by one department and, where accepted, had to force his way up against resistance and through protracted depreciation. There was a moment in his mid-career when it was even touch and go whether he would not be dropped altogether. It was the response to his genius by a large and growing number of the better students in the University that ultimately brought full recognition from the Faculty. But this is a digression.

A long period elapsed before the discussions of that early association were renewed in all their intimacy and intensity. During this interval I had visited him more than once in his summer homes and he had passed a number of months in Princeton, but the real fun began again in the second term of the academic year 1925-6 (if my dates are correct), when I was a substitute at Harvard for an absent member of the Classical Department. Fortunately I was able to rent the home of Professor Ropes, who also was enjoying a "sabbatical". There was a large and comfortably furnished library attached to the house, and here night after night, two or three times a week, Babbitt used to come, and, sitting on one side of the great fireplace, with me—shall I say, his glad victim?—on the other side, poured out such a stream of argument, invective, and persuasion as had not, I am sure, been heard in Cambridge before and probably will never be heard again. It was *magnifique, et c'était la guerre!* The battle-ground was the same as in the old Harvard days, but with a difference. Babbitt's fundamental ideas had not changed by a jot, though they were now reinforced by an appalling mass of erudition at the service of an unhesitating, unfailing, unerring memory. Meanwhile, I had quite definitely moved away from my absorption in the theosophical speculations of India; my heart was now all in a Platonism supplemented by Christian theology of the Greek type. Against the Platonic philosophy of Ideas, Babbitt brought up Aristotle's positive and scientific humanism, and with the claims of theology contrasted the merits of Buddha's non-theological religion which offered the same ethical and spiritual results as Christianity without demanding credence in a dogma and a mythology impossible, he insisted, for the modern mind to accept. Of course my cue was to contend that Aristotle himself, seeing that his positive humanism could not stand on its own feet, was driven at the last to brace it with a metaphysic of the Absolute beside which Plato's Idealism is as easy to swallow as a breath of spring air, and that in religion Buddha had won his army of adherents by the example of his own supposed ascent through countless aeons to absolute knowledge, a myth as difficult to credit as the Incarnation. Naturally I thought at the time I was right, as I still think; but if victory ever lodged on my side, it was of a very private sort, known only to myself when I had crept to bed. But oh the wonder and glitter of those defeats!

It will be seen how Babbitt's attitude towards the great religions of the world might be brought out in such debates with a sharpness that would scarcely be guessed by those who know him only in his books. And this is particularly true in the case of Christianity, where for a double reason he exercised a certain reserve, or "economy", in his public statements. For one thing, he wrote always not for display but for conviction. His mind was eminently practical in that he aimed at getting results and thought much of strategy in attack. He held it a law of sound tactics not to arouse the hostility of those whom he desired to convince, but to make concessions where this could be done with honour; and he used to scold me laughingly, sometimes almost pathetically, for going out of my way, as he said, to make enemies among every party to a controversy. Thus it was that he took pains in his writing to avoid irritating the sensibility of Christian readers. But besides the strategic motive, perhaps explaining it, was the fact that he recognized in what he would call the psychological effects of dogmatic faith a moral and spiritual discipline to be acclaimed and fostered, whatever its source might be. He saw, and admitted whole-heartedly, that belief in the Grace of God operated to awaken the soul "from the sloth and lethargy of the senses", and to produce a "constant exercise of the active will" profoundly akin to the *appamâda* of Buddhism. In all this there was not the slightest intention to deceive or to palter about first principles; but it happened, nevertheless, that many Christians were misled by these concessions. The dogma of Grace, the notion of help and strength poured into the soul from a superhuman source, was in itself repugnant to him, and the church as an institution he held personally in deep distaste, however he may have seemed to make an exception of the disciplinary authority of Romanism. There should be no misunderstanding left on this point. The naked truth will, I believe, redound to his credit; it will clarify and strengthen his influence with the large body of his pupils who feel the need of religion but cannot subscribe to a definite creed. I can remember him in the early days stopping before a church in North Avenue, and, with a gesture of bitter contempt, exclaiming: "There is the enemy! there is the thing I hate!" Undoubtedly that sentiment was softened as time went on, and as he grew more charitably disposed towards those who, for whatever reason, were ranged on the side of decency and restraint; but it never disappeared. On the other hand, he was much closer to Buddhism than would appear from his public utterances. I wish not to exaggerate. In private as well as in public he refused to be denominated a Buddhist, and with perfect sincerity. But in the denial by Buddha (the real Buddha as seen in the authentic texts) of anything corresponding to Grace, in his insistence on the complete moral responsibility of the individual, in the majesty of his dying command, "Work out your own salvation with diligence", Babbitt perceived the quintessential virtue of religion, purged of ephemeral associations, of outworn superstition, of impossible dogma, of obscurantist faith, and based on a positive law which can be verified by experiment, pragmatically, step by step. It was in this way he sought to bring together a positivism in the religious plane with a positivism in what he distinguished as the purely humanistic plane of life and letters.

So much I can say to elucidate what might be gathered from his books. And it seems to me worth saying for the reason that, however pungent and straightforward his language may be in other matters, his frequent allusions to the supernatural left a good many of his readers puzzled over its exact relation to the natural. The difficulty is that in print, so far as I remember, he never distinguishes between the supernatural and the superhuman, or makes clear why he accepted the one and rejected the other. Now Buddhism holds to the supernatural, holds to it, indeed, in the extreme form of an Absolute utterly different from, and separable from, the flux and disintegration and relativity of the natural. But the supernatural so conceived is, properly speaking, not superhuman; it is within man, a part of man's being, just as the natural is; and the ultimate goal of ethics and religion is a state wherein, entirely by human effort, the dualism in man of the supernatural and the natural is dissolved, and all the passions and insatiate desires and all the unattainable strivings of nature are forever stilled. In Christianity, on the other hand, the supernatural in man is regarded as akin to, but not identical with, a supernatural which is also superhuman. Grace is the medium of co-operation between the supernatural will in man and the divine will which is God.

With this distinction between the supernatural and the superhuman in mind one can understand how Christianity brings a disturbing factor into "humanism" as Babbitt conceived it, whereas Buddhism falls quite easily into the whole scheme. Humanism has to do primarily with that plane of practical ethics where the natural and the supernatural meet together, producing a world of harmony and order and mediation. Religion is an attempt to live in a plane above the humanistic, where the supernatural departs from the natural into its own citadel of imperturbable peace. Humanism is thus not anti-religious, in so far as it depends on the controlling power of the supernatural; but it may be non-religious in so far as its business is with the world and does not seek to escape the world. The humanist is not hostile to religion, but he should be careful not to confuse the plane of the non-religious with that of the religious. At the same time, his passage from the non-religious to the religious plane, when he wishes to make it, is simplified by the fact that the higher sphere is still human in the sense that no demand is made upon him to go outside of himself (his higher self), nor to introduce any element of the superhuman as contrasted with the supernatural which was already present and operative in the humanistic sphere.

All this I could understand from our conversations at Harvard. But there was still something in Babbitt's personal attitude towards religion not clear to me, and I had even ventured in an essay published in *The Bookman* to challenge him on this point. In response he said more than once that the time had come when he ought to define his position in such terms as to leave no room for misunderstanding; and this, in fact, he undertook to do in the Introduction to his essays *On Being Creative*, published in 1932. But even there his definition is so complicated with his whole theory of humanism that I doubt if it has cleared up all the difficulties which his followers had felt; the weakness of the written word, as Plato long ago complained, is that it can make no reply to the questioner. And that is why I would supplement his published *apologia* with a reference to a last conversation with him not many months before his health was finally broken.

It was at my home in Princeton. We were sitting in a flagged porch looking out over a stretch of lawn to a background of shrubs and trees arrayed in the rich greens of early summer and bathed in the slanting light of late afternoon. Something of the magic charm of nature, to which Babbitt was always warmly responsive, perhaps also a foreboding of the end so near, opened his heart, and he spoke of his religious convictions with a simplicity and gentleness quite different from his ordinary combative manner. It was like a confession of faith, to be held sacred except in so far as it may serve to complete and elucidate his public profession.

There is in man as distinguished from the animal, he said, a something of which he is immediately, though it may be dimly, aware at the centre of his being, a something which exists apart from the desires and affections and ambitions and dejections of that lower self which is ordinarily thought of as our personality. It may be called the "ethical" will, because, though not to be confused with the lower will which is active in the affairs of life, it does yet, in some untraceable manner, make its effects felt ethically in the plane of nature. To express this indefinable relation, while maintaining intact the distinction between the supernatural and the natural, the higher faculty may be spoken of as the will to refrain, the *frein vital* as contrasted with the *élan vital*; but though it can be defined only in negative terms, it is in itself real and positive, the highest reality and the supreme factor in that which we know as our individual character. At the same time, in this deepest stratum of our consciousness, we are aware of the great paradox that this ethical will is at once both individual and universal, so that he who is most himself is also most human, thinking and acting not as an isolated atom in conflict with other atoms, but as a being at one with the great heart of the world, strong in the strength drawn from that silence of the soul beyond the curtain of perplexing lights and noises, wherein all distractions end in peace.

I should be untrue to myself if I did not say that the refusal to admit responsibility to the superhuman, in the full theistic sense of the word, seems to me to deprive religion of its richest source of inspiration, and to leave it too often a sort of flimsy and unpractical sentiment. But I should be false to my friend if, with that last conversation in mind, I did not assert that, beneath all the fret of controversy, he himself had reached to a fountain of perennial peace and strength. In his books he may have written sometimes vaguely, and not always consistently, of religion; his life was a steady growth, not in Grace, but in obedience to the unrelenting exactions of conscience and in a sense of the littleness of men protesting against the law of their own being. There lay at once his humility and his magnanimity, and therein shines the virtue of his example.

Some time ago I was dining with Frank Mather, whom Babbitt had first met at Williams, and who from that association had come to be united with us in bonds of triple comradeship. He, too, as all readers are aware, is an advocate of humanism, and contends that only the perfect agnostic can lay claim to the Simon-Pure article. Among the guests was a Hindu gentleman of broad culture and keen perceptions, who had been recently in Cambridge and through my introduction had called on Babbitt. In the course of the evening, I asked him how Babbitt had impressed him, and his response was quick and enthusiastic: "Oh, Babbitt, he is a holy man, a great saint!" Now holiness is the last trait that most of us in the West would attribute to one of Babbitt's self-assertive character, but the word came quite naturally from an Oriental to whom the saint is a man notable rather for his will-power than for meek submissiveness. It was, perhaps, because I ventured upon some criticism of this kind that the Hindu visitor put me in my place: "You are not a saint at all, but only a philosopher"; and then, answering a question of our host about himself, added, with a twinkle in his eye: "And you, my dear Frank, are the wickedest man I know."

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# Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism

### ALLEN TATE

THE new book by Oswald Spengler is not an historical work.* It is a tract for the times. The sudden descent of the most aloof philosopher of the age into the arena of controversy, where he evinces a passionate hatred of radical and liberal reform, will puzzle the more timid reactionaries, as it has already moved the liberals to a disgusted repudiation of Spengler and all his works. Mr. Lewis Mumford, writing in *The New Republic*, announced that he had disinfected himself and put on rubber gloves before he began his review. This, I believe, should give us pause; what offends Mr. Mumford is likely to contain something valuable. It will be difficult, however, to disentangle the truth of Spengler's diagnosis of the needs of modern civilization from the bellicose pro-Germanism of his point of view. As early as the second volume of *The Decline of the West*, Spengler had said, speaking of the passing of Culture into the dead form of Civilization: "For us this development has now set in, and as I see it, it is Germany that is destined, as the last nation of the West, to crown the mighty edifice."

There is no space here to review Spengler's philosophy of history, but I think it is necessary, if we are to understand *The Hour of Decision*, to keep clearly in mind the meaning that Spengler attaches to two of his conceptions, in the first volume of *The Decline of the West.* These conceptions are: the Morphology of History and the Physiognomic Tact of one's approach to historical forms. His cultural parallelism, a familiar doctrine by now, does not concern us here; it may or it may not support the validity of his insight into the meaning of our own culture. His Morphology, however, is very much to the point; it roots out our three hundred years' growth of causal history, and substitutes for it a doctrine of organism, under which the development of a culture proceeds plantwise, from birth to decay. Physiognomic Tact is thus the special kind of insight, radically different from historical mechanism, necessary to a deep apprehension of the Morphology.

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* THE HOUR OF DECISION *by Oswald Spengler* (KNOPF. 251 pp. $2.50)

In this view the forms of Western culture rose out of the anonymous peasantry surviving the collapse of Rome. The peasantry, being anonymous, is eternal, vegetative and undifferentiated, rooted in nature, the source of the high styles of Culture. (It has not seemed necessary to indicate Spengler's familiar distinction between Culture and Civilization, the latter being the character of our own age.) Out of this matrix of the soil two differentiations take place, Nobility and Priesthood, the men of action and the men of thought, checked and balanced by each other. Although Spengler maintains that these prime differentiations of the soil are universal at the beginning of all cultures, what concerns us is the modification of the prime forms in Western civilization; for this modification with us has taken on elaborations that are previously unknown.

Into the high style of the two estates, Nobility and Priesthood, the Third Estate, or the Middle Class, inserts itself; but, being essentially outside the great style, the Middle Class never achieves the true inwardness of the style, never gets "in form", and its cultural life is parasitic, limited to aimless accumulation, through money, of the cultural achievements of the two prime estates whose destruction is its chief purpose. The Middle Class, rising to power at the Reformation, has gradually destroyed religion by turning it into art; it has destroyed nobility by debasing style into manners, inner form into superficial taste, an inevitable result of the substitution of money-economics for the feudal concrete sense of destiny resting upon the peasant soil. At the height of this historical process (we are now at the height) comes Civilization, the hardening of the forms of Culture, the replacement of the concrete life of the soil by abstract intellect which in the realm of the spirit moves towards science and, in economics, towards finance-capitalism.

The Middle Class achieves its purpose by building great cities, in which the rootless intellect thrives. "The sly-shrewdness of the country and the intelligence of the megalopolis are forms . . . between which reciprocal understanding is scarcely possible." Again:

> The city assumes the lead and control of economic history in replacing the primitive values of the land, which are forever inseparable from the life and thought of the rustic, by the *absolute idea of money* as distinct from goods. . . . Money has become, for man as an economic animal, a form of the activity of the waking-consciousness, having no longer any roots in Being. This is the

basis of its monstrous power over every beginning Civilization, which is always an unconditional *dictatorship of money*, though taking different forms in different cultures. This is the reason, too, for the want of solidity, which eventually leads to its losing its power and its meaning, so that at last, as in Diocletian's time, it disappears from the thought of the closing Civilization, and the primary values of the soil return anew to take its place.

The question that these glimpses of Spengler's historical doctrine raise, in connection with *The Hour of Decision*, is chiefly this: How can Spengler's organic determinism be reconciled with the call to arms that he now shouts to the white races, particularly the Teutonic peoples, to repel the twin revolutionary menace of the dark races and of the proletariat? I think this part of the new Spengler book may be dismissed as so much Teutonic jingoism. In the violent attack on communism and other phases of the international revolutionary movement, Spengler forgets the schematism of *The Decline of the West*, and falls into a kind of "rugged individualism" when he praises here and there the responsible man who by zeal and foresight builds a factory or a fortune.

Apart from these lapses, springing doubtless from anxiety for the recovery of Germany, *The Hour of Decision* condenses into a brief outline the entire philosophy of history that Spengler has constructed in the last twenty-five years: the application is wholly contemporary, and it can be ignored only by the liberal-communist group in America because this group cannot afford to heed it.

"Capitalism and Socialism are both of an age, intimately related, produced by the same outlook and burdened with the same tendencies. Socialism is nothing but the capitalism of the lower classes." This passage, I think, might have been written by any thorough critic of the capitalist system in England and America, for to be a thorough critic of capitalism is to be also a critic of the socialist movement. Spengler points out that the finance-capitalist, the manipulator, is ignored by communist theory, which divides the economic world into two fictitious classes, employer and worker. The entrepreneur is ignored because the theory of socialist dictatorship is an imitation of the money-dictatorship of the present order. Spengler says: "Finance-Socialists and trust magnates like Morgan and Kreuger correspond absolutely to the mass-leaders of Labour parties and the Russian economic commissars: dealer-natures with the same parvenu tastes." Not only is the finance-capitalist ignored; peasantry and craftsmen, and those numerous classes that were, until after the French Revolution, firmly rooted in the institution of property, are either drawn into the fictitious category of Worker or actually exterminated as in Russia. For the Liberals and Socialists "the peasantry had ceased to exist", with the result, in our time, of an active hostility of the city proletariat to the land-worker. Men are "regarded as appurtenances to the economic situation"; history is "explained in the light of prices, markets, goods". To this theory "we owe the conception of work, not as the content of life and calling, but as the commodity in which the worker trades".

The institution of property has disappeared, as it always disappears, says Spengler, when Culture passes into Civilization. These special terms need not concern us: what does concern us is this—that Capitalism and Socialism are simply different names for an attack on the institution of property that has now been going on since the latter part of the seventeenth century. International finance-capitalism has attacked the ownership of land and has reduced even factory production to slavery; it is the attack from above. Socialism would carry this process further; it would destroy the last trace of private property and schematize the whole function of man in the abstract money-system invented by finance capital: this is the attack from below.

It is a single attack, and those men who stand apart from it may be inclined to look upon the tragic illusion of difference between capitalism and socialism as the fatal argument of Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee. The argument of these amiable gentlemen Spengler calls the White World-Revolution. In the dim background supporting the White, there is the Coloured World-Revolution. The Liberal movement, says Spengler, has marched from Jacobinism to Bolshevism, and in the progressive abstraction of the moral nature of man into the purely economic function, the whole quality of cultural life is ignored: the "workers" everywhere in the world become abstract brothers. The integrity of Western culture, under the catchwords of Justice and Equality, is betrayed by an alliance with the Coloured Races. As European man loses his power of rule, the dark peoples rise to dispute that power. The end will probably be another Dark Age, a *fellaheen* society of economic slaves dominated by small groups who are themselves dominated by the extreme abstractions of money-capital—a society without quality, roots, arts, or a conviction of the specifically human rôle.

But Spengler does not yield the future to that picture. We are nearing the age of the Caesars, the assertion once more of individual power, not the power of money, and now has come the hour of decision. Readers of Spengler's historical works will ask: What are we allowed to decide? The Morphology of our culture must run out until its inner form is exhausted. Although economic determinism is a fiction typical of the decline of culture, when personal destiny and power yield to forces and systems, when the living yields to the dead, there is yet organic determinism which controls the plant-like growth of culture and foresees its end. It is at this point that Spengler's German nationalism enters: it is the hour for Germany to decide whether she will take a secondary place in the "return of the Caesars" or produce Caesar himself.

In the long run it will make little difference which nation, after a century of gigantic wars, emerges with a Pax Romana. Such a century Spengler does not hesitate to predict. But the deepest question of all he leaves, as every one must leave, unanswered. Since Spengler's philosophy of history is also a philosophy of historical values enjoining us to see all "late" forms of society as a decadence from the rooted life of property and land, how far are we entitled to will and to restore those values? How shall we set about it?

# Outside the Protestant Garrison

## R. A. McGowan

THE representative for the Protestant Garrison* does well to bring into the open again the fact that religious origins and beliefs affect economic and political practice. I like, also, to hear him say that the Klan was a crude expression of the sound truth that the old America could not be preserved by Catholics, even while to me the Klan and its progenitors in America have always been, first, a restless and crude expression of ignorant Protestants who saw their America in difficulties and blamed everyone but themselves. A Catholic, of course, who thinks through his religion or who allows it, and not his national or other mentality, to work, as it were, instinctively in his life cannot want to preserve either the old economic individualism of a Calvinist–Adam Smith people or the new plutocracy of Darwinian and Nietzschean Calvinists. Listening to the spokesman for the Garrison I thought at one point that he had grasped this when he said almost the exact truth that the corporative society–which is profusely praised and then neglected or only in part imitated by the Fascisms now ruling–is distinctively Catholic. For to that there is no dissent save for the fine but valid distinction that it misses being distinctively Catholic only by having its origin in the developed natural man, while, also, for its full modern revival and for its just operation at any time a people that is Catholicminded seems necessary. But he shied away from the solidaric society, spoke of the absolutist character of Fascism, and said in a loud voice that its coercive nationalism is Catholic in origin and practice and in a small voice the truer word, that it is a heresy to Catholicism.

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* See *The Protestant Garrison in America* by R. L. Burgess, AMERICAN REVIEW, February, 1934.

I happen to be a Catholic of some forty generations and an American of three or four; and the somewhat belated evidence of the seventeenth-century Chronicles of the Four Masters offers proof that both sides of my family were in Ireland at the time of the incident, little known, of Noah's landing there. Catholic and Irish, I, an American, am therefore a subject of the American branch of the Garrison. And from my Catholicity, I think I see America committing suicide unless we can all throw off our Calvinist mind and become natural enough and Catholic enough to turn corporative. I said "our" Calvinist mind so as to include a great many Catholics. It is not that they ever become whole-hearted devotees of that economic battle-royal in which Americans gloried so long and from which, glorying in it, they ordered the government to stand aloof. Yet under the Protestant Garrison a great many Catholics tended to close their minds to a part of their Faith and resist its instinctive movements so long as the Garrison was moderately successful. This degree of Protestant-mindedness in otherwise good Catholics will be a danger to the country and the Church when the United States once decides to turn corporative; as of course it is now a danger. Yet one becomes philosophical; the failure of the Garrison and the mental revolution of Protestants are helping these Catholics to right themselves.

Puritan-mindedness is common among Catholics all over the world and not alone among my fellow American Catholics of Irish descent or my fellow Catholic Americans of other strains. One might indeed write the history of Catholic peoples and Catholic minorities during several generations back as not only a battle to preserve their Faith and themselves, but as a mental conflict over whether to be integral Catholics or to be followers of the social ideas of that John the Bald of Geneva whose economic and political theories ruled the world under one name or another, one exaggeration and development or another, till the World War and even until the depression and which still linger on. In fact, much that the commentator from the Protestant Garrison speaks of about Catholics is the result of a conflict in them between their Faith and a past or present effort to accept, or live with, the Puritan economic and political code.

There is something of this even in the Irish political boss. His origin carries us, indeed, far afield. Partly he is the child of that political cohesiveness of the Irish, drawn into one party because the other party was the party of the economic bosses; because the old Know-Nothings had turned Republican; and because in the cities, even in New York a little over a generation ago, a prejudice, religious, social, intellectual, and economic, kept them from nearly all positions of distinction. Partly, also, he springs from the desire for influence and power in a society that has given its chief rewards to the practitioners of particular Puritan virtues in which Catholics are not adept. But the great offense of these bosses points to a larger share of their origin in the Puritan complex of Catholics in the United States: their chief offense has always been that of defending, and battening off, the Protestant Garrison. For they and their followers were willing to accept or at least not fight against the code of the Garrison, and Catholics clung together in one party under bosses to try to make the best of things in a cruel world. The Garrison was Protestant and therefore wrong; but it was "American", it laid down the rules; the rules for a long time did not prove too palpably wrong and therefore the Garrison was presumably right. A person speaks of this in the past tense; it is largely a pre-depression situation.

Political bosses, however, are not an Irish-American phenomenon. Political bosses of Irish descent have other origins even than those mentioned; for example, usually a boss must be a friendly and human sort of person and among Irish-Americans many such are found. But the boss is distinctly an American institution. A theory of the Catholic attitude towards government pinned to the example of Irish political bosses in a land of city, state, and national political bosses of various creeds, lodges, national origins, temperaments, and colours falls; the pin does not hold.

References to Diaz of Mexico, Mussolini, Hitler, and the coercion of Fascism seem more damaging. Perhaps it is because they are farther away. Nor is it enough by way of an answer, for the point goes deeper, to remember that the tyrant Diaz never stepped foot in a Catholic Church even to attend a funeral so long as he was in politics; or that Mussolini's Catholicity is nebulous, his career that of a Marxian leader until the War, his favour to the Church in Italy due to the desire for Italian unity, his settlement of the Roman question a planned strengthening of Italian internal unity and international prestige; or that Hitler's Catholicity is only less vague than Mussolini's and his following predominantly Lutheran; or that the absolutist and totalitarian state of Fascism is against the Catholic idea.

For the critic's point finally is that to a Catholic, a dualist, the heavenly and spiritual is perfect while the earthly, the economic and political, is imperfect and something therefore about which to be easily cynical. The Catholic thus lays himself open to absolutist political power, even though he does not believe by his Faith that such power should exist. No matter then whether Diaz, Mussolini, and Hitler are Catholics or whether an absolutist state is Catholic; it is enough (should one except Hitler's Germany?) that the people ruled are Catholics.

A Catholic is indeed a dualist. He does not expect perfection from economic and political régimes. Yet he does not usually rush to cynicism. If, however, he has accepted the Puritan code as everlasting and proper for business and government, then he does become a cynic because he has degraded both economic life and government far below the Catholic idea of their imperfection and because he senses a conflict between his own Catholic beliefs and attitudes and those he has adopted or passively accepted. If he is a cynic, it is because he is a truncated Catholic and has accepted Puritanism or because, among a few, he sees no hope that his country and the world will soon reject Puritanism and, in bitterness, has given up fighting.

Economic and political Puritanism has gone by the name of Liberalism among Catholic peoples ever since the French Revolution. All have tried to adopt it. Among us commonly called Individualism, it is the supremacy and the social righteousness of the acquisitive instinct unhampered and even aided by government and unhampered by economic organization. Diaz, the anti-Catholic tyrant of Mexico, was of this school and was one of a whole planetary system of such politicians, during the late eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the early twentieth centuries, in the Catholic countries of Europe and Latin America. All were anti-Catholic. They knew the conflict between their own ideas and a Church that condemns avarice and wants people to work together and not fight together in economic life. Logical in their allegiance to Individualism, they persecuted and suppressed the Church. But as in the case of Diaz their families were Catholics, and like Diaz when their political career or ambitions ended they crept back, if they could, into the Church that they really believed in all the time.

To try to ride two horses, Catholicism and Puritanism, which were rushing in opposite directions was to them and the peoples they ruled a feat of acrobatics that they did poorly and could never become used to. The Protestant Garrison in the United States and in Protestant England were more fortunate. They rode in a perfect one-horse shay. Their religion, the acquisitive instinct ruling as a virtue their moral code in economic life, their obliviousness to an organized economic life, and their belief in an inactive government made up one concentrated whole, even though they were willing to take personal favours from their government and though they wanted their government to fend off the foreigner and fight him if need be. Unfortunately and inevitably the one-horse shay has now fallen apart.

Capitalism, nationalism, and a favour-extending government, inactive otherwise in domestic affairs, seem to have failed; and the Protestant Garrison, Old England, the Catholic countries, and the Puritans among the Catholic minorities have all grown restive. The pragmatic plan of doing a little, but the least possible, to patch up defects as they reveal themselves in the one-horse shay, on the assumption that the shay itself is good and will last forever, has finally lost validity. This the Protestant Garrison is coming to know. And Catholics have come to know it or suspect it both in the United States where they were usually a time-serving minority and in the supposedly Catholic countries where they were equally time-servers.

If there has been soul-searching inside the Protestant Garrison as they look at the crumbling of their old beliefs, there has been both repentance and joy among Catholics—repentance over past sins and joy at realizing them as sins. Where the difficulty rests among Catholics now is in knowing the right thing to do so as to bridge the gap between a sinful and semi-heretical life and the actual construction of a sound economic and political order that will stand a chance of operating successfully. Naturally there is confusion, here in the United States as elsewhere. For example, Mussolini. He came to power in a Catholic country. He was innocent of ideas but he had a crowded memory and he lived in a tradition, as yet unburied, of associative life which Liberalism had done its best to crush and which his own past Marxism would have none of. That he became a dictator is understandable in a Catholic and physically poor country which had taken a hopeless flier in Individualism and then had tried in catastrophe to go Marxian. What seems remarkable above everything in the Mussolini experiment is that he should have borrowed the corporative idea from the Popular Party, the "Catholic" Party, of Don Sturzo and talked it as the economic and political salvation of Italy even while he has, in fact, made only feeble efforts to apply it. Yet Mussolini's corporativism is not remarkable at all when a person remembers the supple mind of the man and that the corporative society, not baronies, is the traditional Catholic society. Nor is it remarkable that the corporative society has been a commonplace in Catholic social teaching abroad for well over a generation, *i.e.*, during the period when good Catholics were no longer stunned by the onslaughts of a persecuting Individualism.

There is one certain element in Fascism, state absolutism, and another that may or may not be sought for, the corporative idea. These are mutually contradictory. One is not Catholic. One is Catholic. As one grows the other declines. The representative from the Protestant Garrison argues that the absolutist element, which he says is not Catholic, is pervertedly Catholic just the same, but he speaks not at all of the true Catholic element. He sets up a world conflict among three ideas, repeated also in the United States: State Communism, the coerciveness and absolutism of Fascism, and a pragmatic tinkering with Puritan Individualism. A conflict exists but instead of "the coerciveness and absolutism of Fascism" read "the corporative society".

Still the term "corporative" never sounds right to me; I cannot move freely within this Anglicized Italian and Latin word. Corporative comes from the Italian word *corporazione* which means "guild". This old English word seems better. There is, however, an advantage, not to be overlooked, in continuing to use "corporative" in connection with Fascism, for then the idea is not spoiled by bad associations when it appears under another name.

In strange and often diluted forms this guild idea has become, along with ownership, a centre of the modern economic and political struggle. Marxism, as currently held, is for example not so monistic as would appear. Economic society shall go towards common ownership, the Marxists say. Then they instantly divide over whether the government shall be administrator of production and services or whether the various branches of production and service shall be self-ruling guilds. We in the United States now ask: Shall the NRA turn over to organized employers the control of plutocratically owned industries, or shall organized employes be brought into control in the organized code-making and code-administering? The idea of self-governing and organized production and service functioning under some kind of finally sovereign government runs through all discussions, plans, and experiments.

Puritan Individualism, to the Catholic, is against the social nature and needs of human beings. The Puritan in all his forms is beginning to think so, too. Marxian communism under either monistic state administration or "dualistic" guild administration is, for the Catholic, against the individual and social nature and needs of human beings even when, and especially when, he is anxious for common ownership of those properties that the common good requires a government to own. The truth is that the Catholic is not only a dualist. In economic, social, and political life, he is a pluralist. He is convinced that state absolutism is wrong because he is convinced that individuals have natural rights, that families have natural rights, that associations for all sorts of purposes have natural rights, that the body of persons engaged in production and service and in each branch thereof have natural rights and ought to be organized to protect themselves and to fulfil their function, and that natural regions have rights. His idea of society and the state is as remote as possible from state absolutism and centralism under either Communism or Fascism or the Pragmatic Puritanism which seems sometimes to be a step towards the sure rule of plutocrats. And this is apart from his other belief in the independence of the Church and the separate spheres of functions and rights of Church and State.

For a good many reasons I do not want the civilized in the Protestant Garrison to accept Kluxism as an instinctive and fundamentally sound fear of Catholics. Rather it seems more useful as well as truer to think of Kluxers as having an instinctive and sound fear of themselves. Their country isn't what it used to be and it never was; they know about the present, but their fathers were Jackson men before others of their fathers were Know-Nothings. What has been wrong all along is that before we came from Europe we had rejected the old human truth, which is part also of the Catholic tradition, that people in the various industries and services and in all jointly have to organize and administer their economic life if they are to make their own work satisfactory, their economic productiveness full and wise, their service to the consumers just and complete, their natural rights to property safe for themselves and yet not dangerous to others, their government a helpful government and their relations to government those of free men. This guild idea was not in the baggage of the men who fled England to set up little Englands on this side of the water. We started wrong. Yet it was in the older English tradition before the unpleasantness of the revolution of Henry VIII and the rising landlords and the more recent unpleasantness of Cromwell's unanchored and unorganized aspirants to business success. It is hard to throw out of the mind this relatively new but firmly rooted tradition of acquisitiveness and harder still to build up the habits of the associative and democratically co-operative life. Yet it has to be done. As for me, I pin my hopes of a right change in the Protestant Garrison to the necessity of a change, to their semi-Christian tradition, and to the fundamental naturalness of people organizing to make themselves act sensibly and right. One must risk his hopes; and the Protestant Garrison must also change right if the country is to go right.

In a guild society I think, too, that the weighty problem of how to preserve federalism and democracy—which, incidentally, are not "Protestant principles" unless one is to hold that the chartered, self-governing, democratic, and guild cities all over Europe in the Middle Ages originated in Protestantism before Protestantism originated—will be on the way to solution. Surely Communism would wreck them. Surely they cannot be kept if a plutocracy, the fine flower of Puritanism, is preserved that affirms regions only to rule them and democracy only to manipulate it. It is time to start over again. The only choices that I can see are cataclysmic Communism, a guild system of distributed and limited personal ownership, and a country wasting away as it goes on feeding itself Calvinist poison. The Protestant Garrison will probably remain nominally Protestant for many a day. I cannot imagine it going Communist. But need it stay Calvinist-minded? Need it refuse to take those steps backward, which are steps forward, through its Calvinist mind and through that less sharply defined but essentially the same individualistic and unsolidaric thing, its Protestant mind? Yet that retrogressive forward step by the Protestant Garrison and by the Puritan-minded among Catholics is, I think, the great necessity.

# A Letter on Melodrama

My dearest Philippa,

Did you really think for a moment that I was speaking frivolously when I said in my last letter that I had hoped to be able to demonstrate the virtues of melodrama to you? Your answer had a dubious and cautious note, as though you were afraid I might be making fun of you, but nothing was farther from my intention. I was perfectly serious, as you will see before you come to the end of this screed. If the detective or mystery story is not our present-day fictional classic, I do not know where to look for it.

Before I get into my stride, do let me give you "a note on method". You will save yourself a great deal of bewilderment and breath if you take it for granted that most writers (including your godmother) do really mean what they say in their writing. They may be saying something which is unpopular today—which is "mediaeval", or "reactionary", or "not modern", as the usual comment on such unpopular opinions goes—but you will handicap yourself badly both in understanding and in argument if you proceed to read or to answer them on the assumption that they are merely being disingenuous. It is extraordinary how often one finds persons today whose first impulse, on reading the work of an author with whom they disagree, is to say that the author cannot possibly mean a word he says. Pick up any review of, say, a book by G. K. Chesterton, or T. S. Eliot, or Paul Elmer More, and you will find some such charge, either flatly stated or insidiously implied.

Of course this saves the newspaper reviewer a great deal of trouble: if he can persuade himself at the outset that these disturbing writers, and those few others within the public knowledge who speak for tradition in any of its forms, are merely talking to be arrestingly "paradoxical", or egotistically challenging, or because they are too stubborn to revise their early views, he is absolved of the necessity to take them seriously. That means, of course, that he will not have to answer them seriously, to listen to their arguments, or take the time to read their sources—and with new books flowing in on him at the rate of twenty or more a day he would be in a sad plight if he tried to find the time for his belated self-education.

But you and Miss Greer are not in that predicament. You may read as slowly and as thoroughly as you please. So I am going to ask you to pass on one request to Miss Greer. When she says that she supposes I like melodrama, if I really do, because it is such a relief after the "heavier books" I have to read, she is right, and quite within bounds. But when she goes on to add that she has heard that it is a pose of professors, statesmen, scientists, and "other highbrows" to pretend to find relaxation in detective fiction, she is engaged in the activity I have been talking about above. Ask her if she will make a bargain with me, while she and I are engaged in this struggle for the formation of your literary taste, not to refer to my announced preferences as being forms of pose; I will agree in return not to imply that she poses as enjoying novels which I find dull, confused, and unethical.

With that one plea entered (and, after all, she should be willing to grant it, for she more than balances my advantage in being your godmother by hers of seeing you every day), I should like to go on to point out that she has left out one great—in fact the greatest—class of those who turn to mystery fiction for relief. I fear that no publisher would find it worth his while to aim his fiction at an exclusively "highbrow" audience. There are probably a hundred ordinary citizens of no distinction at all, certainly not in their own eyes, who buy and read such books to every one President, professor, or scientist who indulges in them.

Now when good, honest, busy citizens—the masses of unanalytical and sometimes inarticulate "average men"—buy and read one type of book consistently, I feel that my point that the detective story is our contemporary classic is very nearly established without further argument. For such men and women do really react according to the standards and traditions in which they were brought up; and far more of us were brought up to believe in truth and honour and decency than in "chemisms", fatalism, or the fundamental irresponsibility of man. Even today, washed over by floods of fiction which has as its plain or obscure end to prove that man has no free will, no soul, no responsibility, no duties, there are still more readers who turn away from such books in discomfort than there are readers who accept and admire them. Many readers are indeed relieved to find that there are still books published amid the welter of novels of smart life, dull life, high life, and low life, in which they can find recognizable traces of standards which they know, in spite of every assault that is being made upon them, to be valid and eternal.

When you say that you agree with Miss Greer in wondering what I see in "blood, horror, and bad writing", I think that you have made a point. It is because I do not like those things (although, you may be surprised to learn, I can accept bad writing far more easily than horror and blood) that I came so tardily to see the virtues of mystery fiction. In the Greek classic drama the murder, the outrage, was committed "off-stage", for the Greeks, with their uncanny knowledge of the human mind and heart, realized that the detachment which is necessary if one is to find the true significance of any given decision or action can only take place in the absence of physical revulsion. For that reason, and not because they were either squeamish or bad craftsmen, their audiences were not so much spared as denied the spectacle of the murder or the sight of the corpse.

In our modern stories the murder is, of course, seldom seen; but that is because in most stories the plot turns on the deducing and then the hunting down of the criminal. Except for the amount of reticence consistent with keeping the story in suspense till the last chapter, we are seldom fortunate enough to escape a detailed report of horrors. It was because of that extravagance that I missed so long the fact that in our detective novels today we have men and women acting humanly, we still have heroism. I should infinitely prefer less "blood and horror", but if I must wade through pages of gore to see honest words like "good", "evil", "sin", "crime", "retribution", "remorse", "punishment", and "responsibility"—

used as mankind has always used them—well, then, I will kilt up my skirts and wade in! It will be fully worth the effort.

When I had made my great discovery, I made another: Mr. Chesterton had made it long before. But after a while one gets quite used to going all around Robin Hood's Barn, striking the right trail, following it down, and finding that Mr. Chesterton was there all the time. This has been my experience so consistently in the past five years that I can hardly give you better advice than always to read Mr. Chesterton first. In an essay called *On Philosophy Versus Fiction* you will find him explaining his neglect of many grave and laborious books, while confessing that he has been a munificent patron of the more funny or frivolous fiction . . . "in which the joke consists entirely of a corpse, a blood-stained hat-peg, or the mysterious footprints of a three-legged man in the garden". He goes on to say:

> One reason is that I think there is in all literature a sort of purpose; quite different from the mere moralizing that is generally meant by a novel with a purpose. There is something in the plan of the idea that is straight like a backbone and pointing like an arrow. It is meant to go somewhere, or at least to point somewhere; to its end, not only in the modern sense of an ending, but in the mediaeval sense of a fruition. Now, I think that many of the less intellectual stories have kept this, where the more intellectual stories have lost it. The writer of detective stories, having once asked who killed Humphrey Higgleswick, must, after all, end by telling us who did it. . . . But the serious novelist asks a question that he does not answer; often that he is really incompetent to answer.

Once again I turn back to your last letter to me. When you reported that Miss Greer feels that "except for such authors as Dashiell Hammett no mystery-writers are worth following" I realized with cheerful submission to my lot that she and I would be found drawn up in opposite camps from now until the sounding of the Last Trump. If Miss Greer must have incest, cruelty, adultery, obscenity, drunkenness, and double-crossing in her detective stories we shall never see eye to eye. If she prefers (as so many do) a "hero" who is superior to his kind only in the possession of superior guile, then I do beg her not to read mystery stories at all. Leave us one field where the modern passion for being inadmirable need not enter! That seems so very little to ask, with all the rest of fiction to range in. And here is another quotation from Mr. Chesterton (it is in the *Illustrated London News* for March 3), who has lived, he says, "to see even the detective story invaded by doubt and scepticism and sophistry":

> It was long ago . . . that I recorded the very obvious truism that the only sort of modern story that can now be called a moral story is the murder story. The schoolboy who was warned away from penny-dreadfuls might well be so warned on merely aesthetic grounds; but he obviously ought to be advised to confine himself entirely to such shockers on purely ethical grounds. They are probably the only books that are still built on the traditional plan of truth and honour as understood by all the great civilizations of the past. All the rest are more or less persuasive apologies for perjury or more or less attractive presentations of betrayal. We need not go into the curious history of the social decline . . . which has

produced this strange and soft and probably temporary state of things. The whole thing turns on one blank assumption, which is not an answer to the question. It turns on the idea that there should not be rules or warnings against things *because* there are strong temptations to those things. The whole question is turned topsy-turvy, and begins all over again, if we recognize the perfectly simple fact that our fathers made the rules and warnings *because* they knew all about the temptations.

And that is the perfectly simple fact which authors like Mr. Hammett, and readers who admire such authors, always forget. So we have been getting a few detective stories which present murder as hardly more reprehensible than dancing, and the tracking of criminals as no more than a grand game of wits. But these are very few, and I will back the average man to go on demanding the healthier fare till they all die out.

Here are the books which I have read just lately. You realize that there are scores from which to choose, and that I haven't nearly enough time to read the detective stories I should like; and that of course I cannot report so fully on a detective or mystery story as on a novel of a different type. If you are to enjoy them you must learn to be the true fanatic, and to resent, if need be with bloodshed, any attempt to tell you the outcome of the tale before you have read your way through to it.

You will like, I think, Freeman Wills Crofts' *Wilful and Premeditated** although it is written on a plan almost the reverse of the regular mystery tale.

From the first chapters you are allowed to know who the criminal is, why he has murdered and how. (This is the method followed by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes in her famous criminal stories, and, more recently, by "Francis Iles". It is a stark method, but one which I confess I enjoy. Only in this type of story, I believe, is the author justified in making his characters fully "human": in the normal mystery-tale the characters are usually, and most satisfactorily, little more than "types". This lends a kind of impersonality to a story which might otherwise be too compact of horror; it serves somewhat the purpose of the mask on the ancient stage.) The reader watches retribution closing in, sees plainly how the greed, the laxness, the over-anxiety of the criminal contribute to his capture no less than the shrewdness and courage of those who are tracking him down.

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* WILFUL AND PREMEDITATED *by Freeman Wills Crofts* (DODD, MEAD. 338 pp. $2.00)

If you like that, you will like Mrs. Belloc Lowndes's own new book, *Another Man's Wife*,* the story of a selfish, callous, will-less girl with the face of an angel, and of her disintegration under poverty. I liked *Letty Lynton* and *The Lodger* better, but that is a matter of personal taste, I am sure, for this book has all the virtues of Mrs. Belloc Lowndes's best work.

*Death Cruises South*,** by Roger Denbie, has a little too much of the current light novel about it. The dead man is a villain, but he is pursued for the most part by furies no more noble than himself. But if you do not mind the intrusion of Broadway dialogue and the local colour of Bermuda (both of which I should prefer to get in other ways) into a mystery story, you may enjoy it. It is a good riddle without being either tense or inevitable.

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* ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE *by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes* (LONGMANS, GREEN. 331 pp. $2.00)

** DEATH CRUISES SOUTH *by Roger Denbie* (MORROW. 312 pp. $2.00)

*The Bowstring Murders*,* by Carr Dickson, is fun. No one could take the crazy little old peer who is the victim seriously enough to suffer for his death, and his fellow-victim is not introduced to us except by word of mouth, so that we are not rowelled by her sad fate. The crime is adroitly deciphered by a first cousin of Sherlock Holmes's, cadaverous of visage, strong and silent. Ordinarily, remembering those terrible jests of Philo Vance's, I would warn you away from all mystery books which include a touch of humour; but this author is almost always as amusing as he intends to be, and occasionally he is very funny indeed.

Of Agatha Christie's *Murder in the Calais Coach*** I can tell you little more than that I think you will like it. There is a fine point of ethics involved, about which I should love to mount the soap-box and deliver you a lecture, but without giving away the story I cannot indulge myself. You might see if you can tell me what you think it is.

*The Nine Tailors*,*** by Dorothy L. Sayers, I liked best of all these new books. I may as well confess my reason: because the battle line between good and evil is so sharply drawn, and because the instrument of vengeance is so excellently chosen. Miss Sayers has a well deserved name for writing good mystery stories; this seems to me almost the best she has done, perhaps because it is even more full than usual of odd and curious lore. If there were not a little too much emphasis on the gruesome in it I could hardly recommend this book to you too heartily.

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* THE BOWSTRING MURDERS *by Carr Dickson* (MORROW. 280 pp. $2.00)

** MURDER IN THE CALAIS COACH *by Agatha Christie* (DODD, MEAD. 302 pp. $2.00)

*** THE NINE TAILORS, *by Dorothy L. Sayers* (HARCOURT, BRACE. 331 pp. $2.00)

That concludes my list for the month. Let me exhort you not to overlook one of Mr. Chesterton's own books with "Father Brown" in the title; nor *The Man Who Was Thursday*, nor *The Flying Inn*; nor *Man Alive*. And then there are all those delightful books by Hilaire Belloc which are not quite mystery stories, of which *The Postmaster General* is, I think, the latest, and which Mr. Chesterton illustrates with small drawings truly deserving the name of "illuminations". If you are willing to keep these books and the Father Brown stories on the same bookshelves with Mr. Hammett's latest masterpiece, *The Thin Man*—why, then I suppose there is nothing much that can be done about reclaiming you by

Your very loving godmother,

DOROTHEA BRANDE

# The Age of Fans

## H. Robbins

> *But I was thinking of a plan*
> *To dye one's whiskers green:*
> *And always use so large a fan*
> *That they could not be seen.*

THE modern world seems unconscionably full of the notion that two wrongs make a right, that two rights make a chaos, and that a complication is never to be resolved by simplicity, but only by more complications. The old world had a fable that heaven might be reached by piling Pelion on Ossa. The new one makes a dogma of it, which we are all called upon to believe and applaud. And those of us who prefer less spectacular and more reasonable ways of reaching happiness are in for a bad time unless we can persuade our generation of one simple truth.

It is generally agreed that the modern world has dyed its whiskers. All find the colour unpleasing. We have, it seems, to convince the world that the remedy is not a series of fans, but either the drastic operation of shaving, or an appreciation that the organic nature of whiskers will in time restore normality. Neither of these processes is entertained. Fans are the only fashion, and they must be mass-produced, and power-driven.

Property, a good, is badly distributed. Modernity says the remedy is to abolish property, rather than to distribute it well. Speed is an evil and an affliction. It brings death, and threatens diseases new to mankind. The only remedy known to the modern world is to make speed universal. Life is full of indirectness. No man sees a job through, or is fully master of his fate. Personality is depressed as never before in history. The world does not restore personality. It seeks to abolish it. Let us have the civilization of the Wasps' Nest. We are bedevilled on all hands by these false antitheses.

To attempt a complete analysis of the modern refusal to face the reality of antithesis would take us too far afield. It is in any case work for the philosopher. But the best short analysis is probably that arising from the dogma of inevitable progress. Inevitable progress is, with other evil things, a denial of free will, and therefore an enemy of man. It strangles reality, and it becalms unto death that wind of the spirit which says: "I test by happiness."

Progress tests by quantity, and is lower than the concupiscences of the past. Men have sinned by coveting the rarest and finest possessions: the most brilliant diamond, the fleetest horse, the fairest woman. It has hitherto been an anchor of sanity that there was a limit to these greeds while they were real. Only the greed of gain, divorced from things, knew no limit and tended to infinity. But the anchor drags. Mankind lusts to drown in a mere multiplicity of things.

The evil and the remedy are of the spirit of man, but the conflict rages about the material key-point of mechanization. Its astronomical powers of production have dazzled mankind like some infernal bale-gemmed sky. In its purple depths we shall drown unless we can restore the test by happiness and freedom. For never before was man drunk with mere quantity.

The few who challenge this lust are denounced as stone-age reactionaries, as lovers of the old because it is old. For my own part, I protest that I have never loved anything because it was old. The age of cathedrals leaves me cold. I never paced a sentimental way in Cotswold villages, nor, like Mr. Henry Ford, have I wished to preserve an old forge as a museum piece. A good new thing is always better than a good old thing, because it proves art and beauty still alive: and the only worth of all lovely old things is to prove their makers better men than we.

In this realm there are two acts of unreason. To value things because they are old, and to value them because they are new. If man is not to descend from his throne as the lord of reason, there is only one test of things and institutions, that they serve the happiness of man.

But happiness has never till now depended on a mere multiplicity of things. A *sufficiency* of things, as St. Thomas tells us, is indeed necessary to virtuous action, but these are the primary things on which mechanization need have no dominion. There was never a time when a dearth of such primary things was due to the inability of mankind to produce them. Famines are usually made, not by God but by man. How unreal, then, to find the procession of new theories talking of the pre-machine age as the economics of poverty, and the machine-age as the economics of plenty. Yet the whole *cortège* proclaims it with trumpets: Communism, Rationalization, Technocracy, Social Credit, and Fascism. Do they, or do their dupes, realize what they do?

In England and America Fascism is the last of this procession. Its great strides in England, and smaller strides in America, date from the success of the German Revolution. It is a point very interesting in itself that both these countries remained unmoved for ten years after the establishment of the original system, with a much higher intellectual content, in Italy, and became excited immediately it was adopted in Germany; but that cannot detain us now.

English Fascism is even more definitely mechanistic than either of its predecessors. It is a mistake to suppose that it differs radically from others of the list given above. To Technocracy it is akin, to Communism, although it claims hostility, it is own brother. The hostility is of personnel and not of principle.

Its very basis proclaims its hostility to man as a complete person. "It envisages, as its name implies, a nation organized as the human body." (Sir Oswald Mosley, *The Greater Britain.*) But it has been pointed out, by many political philosophers from Plato onwards, that the organs of the body have no life, and therefore no real existence, apart from the life of the whole body. The life of a function in the Corporate State is therefore derived from the life of the state, and does not subsist of itself: a horrible perversion which has revolted us in Communism, but not apparently in Fascism. So much is in a name. The rational conception, by which the state is made up of units of persons or families, self-subsistent and with "certain inalienable rights", is replaced by the lower conception of the hive.

There seem to be two chief reasons for this declension from the rational to the functional. The first is in a false analysis of the reasons for the decline of democracy. In most states, democracy has failed to appreciate that there can be no political power without economic power. The political power has therefore been exercised by that "small number of very rich men" who control wealth. It is highly significant that the only modern state where politicians can be, and periodically are, brought jarringly to book is France, which approximates most closely to a state where economic power is widely diffused. But Mussolini and his imitators have chosen to say that the modern cesspool of politics discredits our notions both on liberty and voting power. What nonsense surely. It discredits only our attempt to bemuse the citizens with a simulacrum of power. The remedy for the political evil is diffusion of ownership, not closer concentration.

The second reason is the modern itch to realize the *X* of the mechanical equation. Something new in politics is to call the tune:

> If our economic analysis has any validity, we must found any constructive policy on the basic fact that present consuming power is inadequate to absorb the production of modern industry. . . . Thus can be achieved the great necessity of steadily and systematically increasing the power to consume, as science and rationalization increase the power to produce. [*The Greater Britain.*]

Does Sir Oswald—do any of these modernists apart from the experts—realize what this means? It means that civilization is to be chained to the enormous bucketing momentum of modern machinery to the *n*th power, and that whatever is *produced* must be *consumed*. Mr. Stuart Chase has told us all that need be told of what is already in existence: of those factories which can produce 900,000,000 pairs of shoes per year, creating a chiropodic as well as a social problem; of that factory where 200 men make all the car-bodies necessary for America. The "Fascists" in Russia, I believe, are already talking of twenty-share tractors which will be set to plough furrows a thousand miles long. And these are only the actualities, or nearly the actualities. It will be replied that the state will control production. By definition and by admission it will not. Sir Oswald Mosley expressly states that "future organization is a matter for technicians". And who ever heard of a technician who could resist turning out five hundred million wireless sets or motor cars where five million trickled out before? I hold no brief for Mr. John Strachey, who is constrained, poor man, by acceptance of the same fallacies. But when half a dozen violently national Fascist states are doing this, the bursting point of the "home market" will mean war. You cannot have government by technicians, and moderation, together. It cannot be too often pointed out that the expert in control governs, not with a mind, but with an enormously enlarged fragment of a mind.

Such appear to be the essentials of the present position, and the danger to which reason in human government is exposed. Defenders of civilization are too much *on* the defensive. Why should we accept "the economics of poverty" when only one famine is known in historic times? We should always rather fall into the hands of God than the hands of men, and it has been overlooked that much of the passion for mechanization is due to a fundamental atheism. The machines, as Nicholas Berdyaev has pointed out, have a certain dreadful life of their own. And as my friend K. L. Kenrick has said, Machinery makes Property indivisible. Nevertheless, the mesmerizing power of the machine is shown in nothing more strikingly than that Berdyaev, in the midst of a devastating argument against mechanization, can say:

> Il est impossible de s'imaginer un retour à l'économie naturelle et à l'état patriarcal, au règne de l'économie agricole et de l'artisanat, comme le rêvait Ruskin. Cette possibilité n'est pas offerte à l'homme: il doit accomplir sa destinée. [*L'homme et la machine*]

What destiny? Man has only one destiny, here and hereafter, and it will be imperilled if we cannot convince our generation that happiness lies in freedom and the homely things, rather than in the senseless thunder of the machines.

The procession of remedies lengthens: it shuffles its personnel: and the more it changes, the more it is the same thing. It will not abandon its only claim to distinction—its infinite power to produce rubbish. We who believe that civilizations are built, not on automatic lathes but on liberty, must resume the offensive, reject the facile accusations of despair—as though it were not a virtue to despair of rationalizing Robots—and insist on the crushing reasonableness of our case.

To the material invasion of mechanization we must oppose the material buttress of property, for nothing is clearer than that the machines involve a Communist or Fascist hive to serve them.

Salvation is not of the engineers. It is of the Declaration: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Have we escaped the oligarchies, to fall into the hand of technocrats who have never heard that there were happy men before Edison and Ford?

# A Mind Divided

## *Bayard Taylor as a Critic of America*

RICHMOND C. BEATTY

SIXTY years ago in America the name Bayard Taylor was one to conjure with marvellously. To say it aloud, with a certain breathlessness, would be to awaken for a typical contemporary the thought of a lusty but romantic person who had gaily gone into darkest Africa, who had been with Perry when Japan first opened its arms to the West, who had had his nose frozen in Finland in fifty-below weather, who had reported the gold rush for Greeley's New York *Tribune*, written verses about passionate Eastern women, smoked hashish, seen harems and eunuchs, Indian temples and Chinese pagodas, bathed in the Dead Sea, and crawled into an obscure pyramid to experience the undissipated smell of a mummy. He was the great American traveller.

Other contemporaries, more intelligent, thought of him as a fairly significant novelist; still others praised his translation of *Faust*. It is probable, however, that to our own generation not even his achievement with Goethe can be termed more interesting than the contents of some half-dozen of his fourteen lectures—lectures he delivered some half a thousand times!—which were ignored by his biographers and which remain to this day, unpublished, in the town library at West Chester, Pennsylvania. (They were briefly noticed for the first time by Robert Warnock in

*American Literature* for May, 1933.) These lectures establish Taylor as, without doubt, one of the most significant Chautauqua speakers of the past century and, also without doubt, as one of the most sadly confused. But what is more important than his confusion is the abiding nature of the questions he discussed, the relevance of his opinions to our present industrial and social bewilderment, the pitiless commentary they involve upon the incompatibility of the ideals of Progress and Leisure. In an odd way this fragment of Taylor's story thus seems to take on the countenance of a warning, seems to present with the detached fatal quietude of history a drama in frustration not unlike many others in process of undirected enactment today. By showing what once proved impossible, in brief, it may leave one with a fitter sense of reality. But I anticipate.

Probably the earliest lecture in point of date is, appropriately, "The Animal Man" (some time before 1855). There has been too much emphasis on *Spirit*, he boldly asserts, and not enough on *Body*. Catholics enjoin fasts. This is wrong; it leads to disease.

> Who can tell how much political oppression, how much harsh and bitter theology, how much individual cynicism and mistrust, may have their origin in the scrofula of the monarch, the dyspepsia of the priest, or the disordered liver or lungs of the layman?

Moral and mental traits are almost uniformly revealed in the physical appearance of a race. The African Negro is tall, but absolutely without grace or beauty. Correspondingly, he has no significant art. The bodies of the Chinese lack *harmony*. Moreover, "their crooked eyes are typical of their crooked moral vision". Young Arabs are physically almost perfect, he said. The thought of physical beauty lured him away from his thesis. He remembered the young girls he had met in the mountains of European Russia. "The women of Circassia are beyond doubt the most beautiful in the world." He had seen them all, from California eastward to Japan, and the palm of superlative went to a tribe whose geographical identity he was compelled to explain, for to his average audience the Circassians were unheard of.

The human race he concluded to have been smaller in early times than at present. Proof: He once tried in vain to squeeze upon his little finger a signet ring of Cheops, builder of the Great Pyramid. Also, he had examined the hilts of the swords of certain chieftains "of the race of Odin, found in Scandinavia", and had discovered that they were "much too small for any modern hand to grasp".

Oh, but for all their diminutiveness, men were vigorous and lusty in the past! Now we are hot-house plants. Each year two million teeth are extracted in London alone! Yet there are no signs of bad teeth in mummies or fossils. And further, there were no surgical instruments among the Egyptians. And even during the Middle Ages, men wore armour weighing a hundred and fifty pounds. We are a degenerate people; it is apparent in our literature.

No man of ordinary penetration can fail to detect, in the poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, or in the tales of Poe, the evidence of a diseased body. Byron, with all the shifting play of his wit, pathos, profanity and passion, cannot wholly purify the pages of *Don Juan* from the smell of gin; and Mrs. Radcliffe, in the nightmare horrors of her *Mysteries of Udolpho*, betrays the suppers of raw beef in which she indulged. Contrast the dark and sinful fascination of *Lucretia*, written by the exhausted and dyspeptic Bulwer, with the ruddy and healthy tone of *The Caxtons*, written by the same Bulwer after his system had been restored by the water cure.

He passed on to castigation of his age: "The characteristic of those books which now best suit the popular taste in this country is morbid emotion." "Gutter literature" has become fashionable, "lewd French novels" flagrantly reprehensible. "Give me the fresh, hearty, warm-blooded creations of Fielding and Smollett, with all their coarseness, rather than the refined and insidious immorality of modern French novelists."

Give him, indeed, the glorious, healthy Elizabethans, those "splendid animals" who were not "pale and anaemic", who were not "long haired dreamy youths" but "master spirits". Give him Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher. Give him the inspired, wise Greeks—their drama and their philosophy. Give him mountain air, the summer surf, a swift horse, a tumultuous river, a grand forest. Give him the great winds and storms and the long rains from heaven: "What—in the name of physiology—*what* sort of race shall spring from the loins of those tallow-faced, narrow-chested, knock-kneed, spindle-shanked simpering sons of rich fathers whom we see every day?" In "three generations" we shall have become simians.

His prescription, like his diagnosis, was simple, too simple indeed, when one remembers his own harassed way of living, to appear anything but ironic. His countrymen were deteriorating, racially, for one reason:

We do not know how to *rest.* The average American works fast, sleeps fast, dresses in the twinkling of an eye, runs to his meals, eats fast, and when he has run through with his stock of health, dies fast. Our public teachers forever cry out to us: Think! Think! or Work! Work! but never Play! Play! or Rest! Rest! We need fresh air and exercise, we need to "open the windows and let in the sunlight, even if the carpets do fade". Let us take deep breaths of God's priceless restorative.

The Y.M.C.A. in ecstatic prefigurement!

In "Man and Climate" (dated 11-9-60—three years before Taine's *History of English Literature*) he is considerably more sober. "Climate is beyond all doubt the most powerful of those external influences which give shape to the plastic nature of man." Certain races have always inhabited particular zones of climate. Indeed, there is no such thing as a cosmopolitan race, "one, that is, which can exist in any climate". He classifies all races, explaining their idiosyncrasies in terms of temperature. The African, for example, "is careless of the future because his existence is certain, the Esquimaux because it is a matter of chance. The former does not advance because he has not the stimulus of necessity, and the latter because he has too much of it. The African has nothing to do but live, while if the Esquimaux *is* living, he is accomplishing all that can be expected of him."

Two important conclusions follow from these facts. The first one, immensely flattering, is that "every important triumph which man has achieved since his creation belongs to the Caucasian race. Our mental and moral superiority is self evident." The second is in part a warning. "Permanent, self-supporting colonization in another climate is impossible. This knowledge should restrain our national ambition." We cannot with safety extend our territory below the eighteenth parallel, or below Cuba and Mexico. The English have tried this, in India, but find it expedient to import fresh blood there almost constantly. Republican government, he is convinced, simply cannot succeed in the tropics. Thus it follows that the seat of government of the United States should always be where it is now, in spite of "gassy politicians who prate of pent-up Utopias and claim the whole unbounded continent".

"The American People" was perhaps the most vigorous of all his speeches. It was written in November, 1861, and is burdened with his loyalty to the Union cause.

But not at first. At first he talks wisely about social differences between America and Europe. He is qualified to make comparisons: "I have had the opportunity of becoming familiarly acquainted with all the civilized races of the earth; and I know no people so paradoxical, so difficult to be fully understood, as the Americans."

We differ from the inhabitants of Europe in particular on one point. "There one finds a strongly-ribbed social system" independent of the distinctions of rank and wealth.

> That is, there are certain understood usages and habits of society, which are so many silent laws for its government. They exist as part of that domestic order which the American traveller finds in the families of Germany and England: it enters into the education of children, and it shapes, in one way or another, every man's plan for the future. In society it gives the charm of ease and grace, by

making each person master of his position, in public intercourse it promotes a courtesy—let me rather say a *humanity*—in the manner of the people at large.

Sadly, he must report that this principle is not operative in the United States.

A man's cultivation, refinement of manners, and moral fitness for society is not, with us, the only test to which he must submit. His degree of wealth is a very important consideration in some quarters, his family in others, his religious views in others, the stand which he takes on some moral or political question in others again; while in certain cities, the street on which he lives, and in certain communities, the very fact of his superior cultivation would be a disadvantage to him.

"In Europe", to re-phrase the idea, one finds "political despotism and social freedom; here, usually, it is political freedom and social despotism." In England, no amount of recovered fortune could restore in a social way a man known to have been dishonourably bankrupt. "With us, if a man has wealth, and the power which wealth gives, his dishonesty is gracefully veiled under the term of 'sharp practice' and does not disqualify him for social consideration." This was a vicious circumstance to Taylor, as it had been a decade before to Dickens; for "one of the noblest uses of society is to step in and punish those slippery forms of injustice, and peculation, and immorality which avoid the grasp of the law. Society thus deals with character, while the law deals with actions."

I am emphatic upon this point because I perceive, among us, a social demoralization, which is the result of giving an over-due importance to wealth. We are tormented by a feverish emulation to keep pace with one another and, as our wealthy class represents neither the intellect nor the refinement of our people, success in the race exhibits itself in display, in extravagant habits, in an ambition to keep up appearances as the main business of life.

How does he account for this blatant false pride? Largely through the realization that a comfortable living is in America so easy to obtain that poverty is regarded as a reproach, as something indicative of a want of industry or energy.

Let us place character before wealth and believe again that the grand old name of gentleman is a richer possession than an illustrious coat of arms.

The treason of the degenerate Washingtons of our day is not gilded by the immortal patriotism of our country's father: it becomes a blot of blacker damnation. When you hear a man boasting that he belongs to an old family, remember that you, too, are descended from Adam and Eve. I have heard so constantly from citizens of a certain state that they were connected with the best families, that I longed—for the sake of change—to make the acquaintance of a few of the worse families.

The reason for his popularity with the masses begins to grow plain. He catered to their ageless prejudices and envies, soothing them with the comfortable dogma that when Adam delved and Eve span the caste system was unthought of. Supreme optimist, he felt God in himself, as before He had dwelt in John Randolph and Jefferson and William Byrd and the Earl of Essex. His own experience proved it. Had he not risen, as of old he dreamed to rise, from obscurity to an international fame? It was a matter of record.

Yes, the Virginians are intolerable people, with their assumptions of grandeur, and leisure, and conviviality, and their contempt for progress. They have talked of the South as though it were better and more civilized than the North—these preposterous and arrogant slaveholders who have no large cities and who gamble outrageously on horses and who are often drunk. Let us look at this section of rebels, fairly.

"The white trash of the South represents the most depraved class of whites I have ever seen. Idle, shiftless, filthy in their habits, aggressive, with no regard for the rights of others." (He had visited as far south as St. Louis, he had been to Washington, he had seen Mississippians—how typical of their state one can readily guess—on the boat which took him to the California gold rush. Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Florida he had never seen, except to pass through them, partly at night, on the train en route to New York from Mobile.) Yet "these barbarians seem to have united all the vices of the Negro with those of their own race, and they almost shake our faith in the progressive instinct of the Anglo-Saxon blood".

(And why did they shake his faith *really*? Because they despised the *Tribune* and would not subscribe to it, had but a meagre interest in salvation through Lyceum lectures, often used horse and wagon instead of railway, had poor roads, did not buy books as readily as his publisher wished, held slaves, preferred Horace, Juvenal, and Pope to Longfellow and Emerson, did not practice the Dutch ideal of efficient cleanliness, and finally because they seemed to feel, in general, that a thing can be new without necessarily being, by the simple fact of its newness, virtuous.)

He continued his indictment of the South in these terms:

Society there has been slowly drifting back toward the conditions of the feudal ages. The planters have gradually absorbed the wealth and political power, and the poorer classes, utterly neglected, unschooled, unencouraged, despised even by the chattels of the former—have become, not indeed serfs but savages. In the North, the superior dignity of *labour that is free*, *the beneficent system of education*, and the absence of any recognized caste, have subdued the inequalities of society to a greater extent than the human race has yet known. The surest guarantee for the permanence of our system of government is afforded by this result. [Italics mine.]

(Free labour? Free to do what? Why, free to choose between work and starvation. Free, when ill, to be discarded by one's impersonal employer. Free to be abruptly laid off when business conditions are slack. A free pawn in the hands of economic forces, unpredictable and devastating even now. Free to contend with the Giant Industrialism for one's own frail but wistfully longed-for desires. Free to live, or to die—it is irrelevant—in a world storm-shocked and rudderless but guided by a misty faith in the word *education*, which miraculously—in seas uncharted despite the ingenuity of our philosophers—will take us all to a quiet harbour, somehow close beside childhood's heaven.)

The South must be broken, by force.

It has been reserved for *us* to hear the most monstrous treason of history encouraged, under the plea that the suppression of it would be "coercing" a people! In a crisis, when our national existence is at stake . . . we still hear the lament that the simplest measure of self-preservation on the part of the government is a dangerous assumption of power. . . . I have never believed in submission to outrage since I was attacked by highwaymen. I have never believed in "moral suasion" since I read that the Saviour *scourged* the money changers out of the temple.

The doctrine of states' rights is merely a device whereby to escape obedience to the will of the majority. . . . The idea of loyalty to a state is so childish that a man of ordinary intelligence should be ashamed to entertain it. I was conversing, last winter, with a Virginia secessionist—one of the first families of course—who actually had the hardihood to say: "I am a Virginian first and an American afterwards. Allegiance to my state is superior to my allegiance to the Federal government." "Very well," said I, "step outside the United States and see what good your Virginia loyalty will do you. Go to Europe with your governor's passport and see how far you will travel. Say you are a Virginian and people will ask: 'What's that?' Hang out your state shield with its *sic semper tyrannis*—the meaning of which we shall make you understand some day—and you may hear the question: 'Is that one of the new Polynesian kingdoms?' But say you are an *American*—point to the star of Virginia on the national flag—and no other explanation is necessary." . . . I must do the man the justice to say that he answered: "Well, I never thought of it in that way."

The quaint reason for preferring one's country to one's state was that the country was larger, more powerful; and its endorsement of one's passport meant that one could travel freely. But might not one find an occasional mortal, fairly sane, yet not interested in travel at all? Might not this mortal be interested, rather, in the immediate land which nourished him, a land whose seasonal miracles of flower and harvest and bleak quiescence he had witnessed from a time long past any clear remembering? Might he not feel, this mortal, that the only land which mattered *truly* was the land which he knew, on which he had walked and worked, and in which the dust of his fathers slept? Could not this land, held in by an invisible boundary and forming what men called a state, be, to him, the *one* reality, and all that extended outside remain abstract, in his imagination—so many names which no human associations had rendered lovely or tangible to him, good in their way, no doubt, but different, vague, places on maps where unbelievable things went on at a rather bewildering rate? There are still a few who think this sort of person not only possible, but desirable; and who think, further, that his wisdom is rooted in something which words—even Taylor's words—are strangely impotent to sweep away.

This was a turgid lecture. Taylor digressed for a time to pay his courtesies to corrupt politicians. Again, because of the overwhelming prosperity of the country, we have grown careless of the means people employ to get money. The further fact that federal and state salaries are inadequate encourages administrative dishonesty. Why not have an intelligent civil service, within which the holders of government positions are promoted according to merit? His plea for this improvement is convincing so long as he extols the increased efficiency that would result from its adoption. But the South, monstrous ogre, blinked at him again, and again he paused to hurl his rhetorical thunderbolt. Political corruption was widespread for a good reason:

> When throughout the South the standard [of political probity] has fallen so low that an oath has lost its sanctity, we must not suppose that even the sublime loyalty of the North has yet purified us from a share of the reproach.

> But let us take heart and
>
> sink all narrow interests, all state arrogance, all sectional jealousies, in the nobler sentiment of loyalty to the American Union. . . . We shall not exchange the security of the Past for the constant presence of a rival and hostile power. For God has united North and South in a common destiny, and the Devil, with rebellion as his agent, shall not put them asunder!

In the address "Ourselves and Our Relations" (written in 1864, later revised) he repeats a good deal of what was more comprehensively stated in the above discussion. Pleading for a stronger central government, he cites instances abroad of price-fixing, condemns our identifying culture with religious orthodoxy or financial success, and regrets the tendency in rural sections to "resent the least departure from accepted ways and habits of life". In this regard the average small community exercises so narrow and tyrannical an influence "that whoever desires a little social freedom is driven to seek it—or rather the nearest approach to it—in our large cities".

He condemns the electoral college. It thwarts majority rule and, hence, is not democratic in spirit. He pleads again for his civil-service idea. He is frightened by the spectacle of immigration. After five years' residence here an immigrant can vote, and in so doing neutralize the will "of our wisest and most experienced native". The immigrant is a temptation to our politicians: he is easily drilled. Consider our criminals: seventy-five per cent of them are foreign born! We should remember that "in a republic every unintelligent ballot is dangerous". It is the positive duty of every citizen to vote. Severe punishment should be meted out to those who persistently fail to do so. Education is our only hope.

The great danger this republic faces is that of decentralization—not its opposite.

> Local pride—state pride, if you choose—is a natural but contracted sentiment. Yet our politicians, our authors [probably in their regional fiction] have all been guilty of exalting it above the grander, *national* pride which should bind and blend all narrower affections. . . . I have been a citizen of three states, and have found that my allegiance is as easily transferred as my residence. So far from the national government encroaching on the rights of the states, I think it has allowed them the exercise of functions which properly belong to itself. As only the nation can levy war, so the militia system, which is designed to furnish it with resources, should be entirely in the nation's hands. . . . A state should be obliged to guarantee not only a republican government to its citizens, but the education without which that form of government has no certain permanence.

The South declared that the right to secede was not denied by the Constitution. Taylor answered that no government granting that right can survive. Secession was *assumed* to be a crime. The right of suicide, for that matter, is not denied in the Bible. He who helps to build a nation upon the basis of the secession principle "is either a dishonest man or a hopeless fool. The history of all confederacies—from the Greek to the German confederacies of our own day—has been one of inevitable failure." And, of course, if the mere fact of survival is to be the only criterion of greatness, he is right, though not a few tightly-knit empires have failed, unaccountably, as well.

> Do those who advocate confederacies know what they mean? Better than such a miserable abortion—which has no national name or sentiment, enjoys no respect abroad and inspires no faith at home, cheats the present of half its harvest and sows no seed for the future—better than this would be the absolutism of Russia.

"Life in Europe and America" (about 1865, revised later) contains much of Taylor's criticism of the Gilded Age. To the reformers who were beginning to agitate against the use of alcohol he mentioned the European custom of taking the stimulant and of saying in effect "the citizen may do as he pleases; but if he does drink he shall be furnished the genuine article". He commends again the practice, in Germany, of fixing the price of necessities like "bread, meat, and beer". And he talked, with considerable foresight, against the Whig philosophy of governmental protection of business, although it was a philosophy which his friend Horace Greeley had long advocated in the *Tribune*.

The interests of business, the Whigs had reasoned, are the interests of society; it is therefore the duty of the state to help its citizens to make money. "Whiggery is the expression in politics of the acquisitive instinct, and it assumes as the greatest good the shaping of public policy to promote private interests." Now the fly in this sweet ointment did not escape Taylor's notice. He saw that the ideal of paternalism in the common interest had a way of degenerating, in practice, into legalized favouritism. Protecting a business, he declared, "makes that business able to cheat and oppress and corrupt the public". Was the true aim of our government apparent when an individual three years ago chose to stop the traffic between New York and the West at Albany, or when three or four individuals recently gambled with the value of gold and disturbed the business interests of forty millions of people? It is perhaps owing to this regard for the individual that, with us, corporations are far more irresponsible and tyrannical than in any other civilized country. Our politicians, of whatever party, cry out against corporations, and yet we see them controlling entire states, electing their own Legislatures and members of Congress, demoralizing voters, and exercising other dangerous privileges in defiance of public interest. We are silent under impositions which would raise a popular tempest in many countries of Europe.

Materialistic personal ambitions he deplored no less outspokenly.

One of our prevailing national characteristics might be called *Discontent*. The more splendid and far-reaching our aims, the more haste we make to realize them, seeking short-cuts and accepting all kinds of risks and hazards. The present requirements of society—a fine house, handsome furniture, and a pew in a fashionable church—are not very difficult to fulfill. Those who distance their competitors and reach what is called *the top*, encourage the others to struggle after them. These in turn stimulate others farther behind until, from top to bottom, we find the whole people engaged in a struggle to keep up appearances.

In Europe, this condition is anomalous. Ambition there "is sober, and aims at realizations which are not quite so far and splendid". The result is a greater stability, a peace unknown to more aspiring societies.

Finally, he deplored the rise of the cities. Throughout the republic one was able to trace a natural ambition for further advantages, more flattering successes than small communities can offer. In a great many cases, the true remedy would be, not in deserting those communities, but in improving them. Too many of our farmer's sons become dyspeptic clerks or indifferent lawyers, or shiftless adventurers, through a mistaken estimate of their own powers. They do not see that it is more prudent to stand at the head of a simple universal profession than at the tail of any other.

A city, moreover, is an expensive place in which to live. For that reason

it imposes a tax upon matrimony and thus encourages vice. There is not in the world—and probably never has been—a city where one must pay so much and get so little in return as New York. We already behold there, and in our other cities, those extremes of reckless luxury and still more reckless poverty which we once supposed were peculiar to Europe.

The home as an institution cannot long stand against the disintegrating fury of such an environment.

## II

These are, perhaps, in outline, Taylor's most important social and political convictions. In the way of positive improvements, he endorsed the civil service, an educated citizenry capable of intelligent voting, and, most emphatically, a strong central government possessed of approximately dictatorial powers over corporations and commonwealths alike. Negatively, he decried wealth as a measure of one's social prominence, the exploitation of the public by big business, the philosophy of acquisitiveness, the rise of the city, the waning influence of the home, and the Southern way of life.

The fundamental contradiction in his thinking is most manifest, as has already been indicated, in his attitude towards the South. For the South was more genteel than the North, was more studious of manners and leisure, was less acquisitive, was less prone to endorse futile hurry and speed and to mistake these things for progress, represented an established order such as he had come to admire in Europe, opposed by the very nature of its institutions the rampant rise of the cities, centered its interests in home life—exemplified, in short, practically all the virtues of civilization and decency which he was given to commending.

But there were two other characteristics of the South which blinded Taylor to these virtues. He held to the sentimental conviction that there can be but one kind of slavery—the slavery of physical ownership. And the South openly practised that kind, deaf to the hysterical protest of Garrison and other abolitionists. He held also to the Hamiltonian conception of government, that of a government directed by an individual possessed of almost unlimited power. And the South was unregenerate here. There were, of course, corollary grievances against the section. The war—brought on, he believed, by Southern stubbornness—had hurt the publishing business and the Chautauqua business, and he looked to these activities for his income. Besides, the rebels had killed his brother Fred at Gettysburg. The South, in brief, could not possibly be virtuous. He hated the South.

And this was unfortunate. For it happened, as a result of his hatred, that Taylor's philosophy was stranded, left at loose ends, and deprived of the insight that would have restored his confused world to coherence. The one region in America which practised the virtues he extolled, the one region which despised the vices he despised, he could neither see nor understand. He had drunk of the Liberator backwash and, like other drink of a later day, it had struck him blind. There was nothing real, nothing tangible with which his point of view might be identified. He was driven, because of his dilemma, to commend the forces of unification, which were the forces of industrialism; and in so doing he became in an unconscious way an advocate of all the brutality and corruption and spiritual depravity which he deplored. Universal education, he thought, would prevent this villainy. But a later and more chastened wisdom has rather roundly established the lamentable truth that his ideal of universal education cannot arrest in mankind the impulse of selfishness, cannot commend nobility in any sweeter way to his contemplation, is indeed usually wasted upon that wretched creature.

# REVIEWS

## The Restoration of the Farmer *

IN A compact little book, Mr. Cassius M. Clay surveys the farm question and arrives at the following conclusion: The well-being of the American farmer is the ultimate key to the economic and political situation. If the United States Government is to be saved, and is to continue as those who founded it intended, then the Government must save the farmer, and not allow itself to be made an agent of discrimination against him. Furthermore, if the institution of private property is to be saved, and with it the civilization based on property, then the farmer must be cherished and his way of life must be respected.

This is familiar doctrine, at least to all who have followed the arguments of the Distributists in England or of the *I'll Take My Stand* group in the Southern states. (Neither of these groups, by the way, seems to be known to Mr. Clay.) What is interesting in his study, then, is not so much the doctrine as the quarter from which it comes and the slight additions that Mr. Clay makes.

In his preface Mr. Clay tells us that he looks at the farm question from the vantage ground of a two-part experience. His people, for generations back, have been farmers; half of his life was spent in a farm environment; part of his book was written "within the quiet of the author's family home, the bricks of which were fashioned in the yard with a hand-mould, before the building of a railroad to the local county-seat". The rest of his life has been spent in New York City, where he has been an attorney-at-law and has mixed busily in the affairs of industry, transportation, banking.

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* THE MAINSTAY OF AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM: A Survey of the Farm Question *by Cassius M. Clay* (MACMILLAN. 269 pp. $2.50)

Mr. Clay thus has—what is rare in our day—an insight into the farm question from two points of view. He knows what the farmer knows, but what the farmer, being inarticulate (or at least not represented in *Harper's Magazine*) cannot say for himself to the public. And he sees with urban eyes, too, yet without being corrupted into the easy assurance which makes all urban solutions of the farm problem sound like an advertising programme for a new factory.

A man with such insight ought to be welcomed and respected. It is significant that, after prolonged investigation into the facts and much research into his own experience, he arrives independently at conclusions that others have reached by different routes. He would agree, it seems, with the authors of *I'll Take My Stand*, rather than with some of their horrified critics, that the present situation must be defined in terms of Industrialism *versus* Agrarianism, and that a milder definition does not face the facts. For the rule of industry, expressing itself economically and politically, has actually fought *against* the farm. The industrial system has not grown up beside the agrarian régime on a fraternal and friendly basis, but it has been antithetical and hostile, openly and secretly. Industrialism has used the Government to exploit and destroy the farmer, even at the moment when it pretended to be helping him. But in so doing it has accomplished its own ruin.

In this connection Mr. Clay offers an admonition to his capitalist friends: "If capitalists were to consider what is to their best interest from a long-range standpoint, they would make the well-being of agriculture their special concern." Mr. Clay, so far as I know, is the first representative of a capitalistic point of view to offer an assurance so bold. It is practically unheard of among the city-minded, and perhaps inconceivable to most of them.

As for the hard matter of how to achieve salvation for the farmer, Mr. Clay is wise in declaring that there is no short and easy solution. He has no ambitious Theory; he trots out no Panacea; he has little to say about the sacred Proletariat. He merely reviews the facts, rather systematically, and exercises a little common sense. One by one he examines and dismisses various persuasive schemes. Co-operative marketing, he argues, has already proved a failure. Price-fixing is dangerous—a weapon that may turn on the user. Crop reduction is an emergency proposition only; it avoids the issue and does not reach fundamentals. Above all, these devices, dear to the heart of those who want a "planned economy", have the grave defect of being framed from an industrial point of view only. They are devices of minds that are ignorant of agriculture and hostile to it. The "planned economies" so far advocated not only fail to grasp and embody the farmer's point of view; but they do not even have an intelligible notion of the whole thing they are planning for; they have no real idea of adjusting agriculture to industry or vice versa. None of them, as Mr. Clay notes, pays any serious attention to the old discriminations in favour of the industrialist and against the farmer which are the product of seventy years of industrial misrule in America.

But the removal of such discriminations, in Mr. Clay's opinion, is the first necessary step in righting the situation. The farmer pays a cruelly unjust share of taxes, of every variety, and cannot "pass them on"; such tax burdens must be equalized. The farmer suffers from freight rates which penalize him unduly in marketing his products; that penalty must be removed. He is the victim of subsidies, direct and indirect, paid by the Government to the industries that rob him, and in turn, out of his own pocket, the farmer pays ultimately for the very subsidies which destroy him. Then either the subsidies must be ended, or the farmer himself must be subsidized. Subsistence farming, of course, must be a major feature of any sensible programme for farm recovery; but since there are many varieties of farming, subsistence farming alone is not a solution. Since what most farmers need is markets, a low-tariff policy is a cardinal point in Mr. Clay's programme. He believes the tariff question is as much alive as ever—Calhoun was right after all. It is an anomaly that America, now a creditor nation, should use a high tariff to slay the foreign demand for American products. Long-range "planning", if it be really statesmanlike, will have to consider how to lower the tariff walls.

Of course all this will have to come gradually. Mr. Clay does not make clear how it will fit the Roosevelt programme, which so far has not announced principles, and has done more to pacify the farmers than to save them. As for curtailments and regulations for the industrial system, Mr. Clay seems to think them just, and above all practicable, as programmes for a "planned agriculture" are not. Anyway, if the farmer is restored to health, such curtailments of old privileges will prove to be far less than would occur if we are driven, by urban folly and socialistic wrong-headedness, into a "closed economic system" and an "alien fascism".

Mr. Clay makes these statements rather baldly, without flourish, in the manner of a lawyer's brief. He seems unable to expand his points or to set forth a very clear philosophy of agrarianism, though he certainly respects the farmer's way of life and wants it preserved for its own sake. In short, he is a rather stiff and awkward writer, with more insight than skill. Perhaps this is another way of saying that Mr. Clay is not glib. Since he is not glib, he will not be persuasive to those who follow the brilliant sophistries of men like Mr. Stuart Chase. What Mr. Clay offers us is information, passably well organized; knowledge of farming and industry, sound and apparently firsthand; and Jeffersonian common sense. What Mr. Stuart Chase offers is an industrial economics borrowed from Russia; a smattering of agricultural items picked up from a visit to Mexico; and the slick facility of a professional contributor to magazines. The man who knows, can't write; the man who can write, doesn't know and may be incapable of learning. That such dissociation should prevail is one of the vices of our times, as common among economists as among poets. Mr. Clay will not be read or believed; Mr. Chase, very likely, will be both read and believed. All that is an evil—another evil—which only the restoration of the farmer in the long run can set right.

DONALD DAVIDSON

## The Laureate of Common Sense *

WE have here the publication in book form of six lectures delivered by Professor Lowes on the William J. Cooper Foundation at Swarthmore College in 1932. It is to be supposed that the lectures were planned as an introduction to Chaucer, and as a stimulus to the wider knowledge and enjoyment of Chaucer's work; yet the casual reader might be forgiven if he were to feel that the book seems a little too specialized for such purposes. *Geoffrey Chaucer* contains only a little more than fifty thousand words—about 250 small pages—and it surely makes no pretense of being a scholarly treatise. Yet it is so full of the technicalities of Chaucerian scholarship that it would probably deepen the average reader's fear of the difficulties of the poet rather than make the reading of Chaucer seem as easy and pleasurable as it really is. And Mr. Lowes tells us precious little of the true, philosophical rewards which await anyone who will try to learn to read the "Father of English Poetry" in the "original".

*Geoffrey Chaucer* opens with a chapter on what Professor Lowes chooses to call "Backgrounds and Horizons". Since he is careful to deal only with those elements in mediaeval life which have almost completely swum out of our ken, the chapter is likely to seem rather formidable. The greater part of it is devoted to a brief exposition of the mediaeval notion of astronomy. That a knowledge of this is necessary for students of Chaucer no one will deny, but the necessity will make itself obvious to anyone who begins to study the poet's work, and it is a terribly unappetizing bait with which to catch new friends for a neglected author.

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* GEOFFREY CHAUCER *by John Livingston Lowes* (HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN. 246 pp. $2.50)

The second chapter is something better—perhaps the best in the book. It gives all that is actually known about the poet's external life, and describes admirably the sort of world, so far as business and politics are concerned, in which Chaucer lived. One could ask for nothing better, although the mysterious question of the identity of Chaucer's wife is side-stepped in a fashion likely to confuse the neophyte. Particularly interesting and illuminating are the brief accounts of Chaucer's London associates, such as Sir Nicholas Brembre, four times Lord Mayor of London and a politician of a very modern sort, who was finally executed during the threat of a French invasion.

We are then led through another Stygian bog, the French romances of Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Machaut, Eustace Deschamps, and Jean Froissart, and the mediaeval evolution of the story of Troy. Of course it is true that on such stuff Chaucer was nourished, and we know that he read these endless tales, if only because he "thoghte it better play Then playe[n] either at chesse or tables". That he borrowed endlessly from these delectable authors is unquestionable, but so did everyone. The important thing is that Chaucer enriched and transformed almost everything that he borrowed, and it is surely enough for the beginner to know that there were sources, without being burdened with the sources themselves.

The fourth and fifth chapters, conceived along somewhat the same lines as Mr. Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu*, but of course infinitely less detailed, show how Chaucer used what he borrowed, and give us an aesthetically sensitive summary of his work up to the *Canterbury Tales.* And we owe Professor Lowes a debt here for his exquisite appreciation of that little-appreciated work, *Troilus and Criseyde.* Anyone who had heard him lecture on this poem would know that he could accomplish such a task, and the execution is well up to one's fondest expectation. It is here only that Professor Lowes truly incites one to read and be convinced. Perhaps the most acute piece of criticism in the book is the last paragraph of this exposition of the *Troilus.* We have had a summary of the extraordinarily personal epilogue to the poem, the epilogue which contains that most pathetic of invocations and poet's prayers, the two stanzas beginning "Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragedie. . . ." Professor Lowes continues:

> Is Chaucer, in the torrent of feeling with which the poem ends, repudiating his own masterpiece? No notion, I think, could be farther from the truth. He has depicted, with what he must have known to be almost supreme art, the tragic irony of life. And now the poignancy of what he has vicariously experienced, no less as a very human being than as an artist, is almost more than he can bear. It is the same revulsion which Philip Sidney experienced, looking back, in his closing sonnet, on the great sequence in which he too had depicted earthly love:

> **Leave me, O love, which reachest but to dust!**
> **And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things!**
> **Grow rich in that which never taketh rust. . . .**
> **Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.**

In the closing lines of the *Troilus*, and in the infinite pity of his farewell to Creseyde, Chaucer, one cannot but believe, has for almost the only time revealed something of his very self.

Mr. Lowes's last chapter says all the things which need to be said about the artistry of the *Canterbury Tales*. He ends with his own particular refutation of Matthew Arnold: every critic feels obliged to say something on that score, so great an impression has been made on our thought by Matthew Arnold's imputation of lack of "high seriousness" to Chaucer and Burns. So long as the imputation is denied, no lover of Chaucer will very much care what may be the bases of the denial.

The paragraph just quoted from the end of Professor Lowes's appreciation of the *Troilus* is unquestionably a fine example of the type of psychological insight which can be distilled from the best kind of modern "scientific" research. There is little doubt that it represents a truth in relation to all sustained poetic writing, yet in the case of Chaucer it is a half-truth, as indeed must be every purely "scientific" finding. It is interesting to compare what Mr. Chesterton said in his book on Chaucer about the very same epilogue to the *Troilus*. Mr. Chesterton perhaps overlooked the subtle truth which Mr. Lowes points out, but Mr. Lowes completely neglects the far more important truth which Mr. Chesterton drives home: namely, that a mediaeval Catholic writer, however fond he might be of the Pagan story which he has so movingly told, could not abide that anyone should be misled into taking Paganism too seriously, and therefore felt it necessary to utter a *caveat* at the end of his work:

> But when Troilus was actually dead and done with, the poet suddenly turned and spat all these things out of his mouth, as the saint spat the cold temples of Laodicea. He treats all his graceful gods and goddesses exactly as "the damned crew" which the Puritan Milton hurled howling from all their hollow fanes.
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> Lo here, of Payens corsed olde rytes,
> Lo here, what alle hir goddes may availle;
> Lo here, these wrecched worldes appetytes;
> Lo here, the fyn and guerdon for travaille
> Of Jove, Apollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!
>
> . . . That is what the serious Chaucer said of the serious paganism. That is what he thought of the painted pictures on the wall [Pagan remains in the Middle Ages], when there was talk of their blocking up the window [Christianity].

The contrast which appears in these two critical treatments of the same passage points directly to what I find to be the greatest fault in Mr. Lowes's book on Chaucer and, indeed, in all criticism, however learned, of the academic or "scientific" sort. The trouble is that it is unscientific. It takes an author like Chaucer, a Catholic living in an age of Catholicism, even though an age of decadent Catholicism, and deliberately leaves out the most important thing to be understood about Chaucer, particularly for a non-Catholic: Chaucer's philosophy and religion. Much space and infinite patience is devoted to what is admittedly obsolete and different from our own times, while what may seem different from our own times but continues relevant is entirely neglected. It is as though a botanist set out to write a treatise on roses in which only the leaves and roots are dealt with, never the flowers. The result is a book which can interest only the academic, or those who already know the worth of the flowers.

In any review of a book on Chaucer I should feel obliged to say one other thing, a thing which every popularizer, every critic writing for the general public has seemed deliberately to avoid: and that is the necessity for learning the language of Chaucer if one is to enjoy him. There has been enough and too much dalliance with renderings and translations of Chaucer into modern English. Why must we, who keep quoting the line, insist on "mis-metering" some of the finest poetry in English? For Chaucer's English is not hard to learn. Complete mastery of it may require profound philological study, but something far short of complete mastery is perfectly adequate for enjoyment. Even Mr. Chesterton advocates a system of modernization which, in spite of its conservatism, is only one stage removed from the celebrated mismeterings of Dryden. It is surely safe to say that anyone possessed of the equivalent of a university education can easily learn enough of Chaucer's English to be able to read it with pleasure. And there is the consolation that after a few hours of drudgery, one has laid open to oneself the writings of one of the most musical and rational of English poets, the laureate of that *communis sententia* which the modern world seems to want so badly.

HARRY LORIN BINSSE

## Evangelical Humanism*

CHRISTIANITY has varied in its attitude toward secular achievements. St. Paul declares that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; yet to the Athenians he quotes one of their own poets as confirmatory witness; and he can put to homiletic service an altar To an Unknown God: "Whom ye ignorantly serve, Him declare I unto you." Are Plato and Aristotle the rivals of the Church, or are they the divinely predestined schoolmasters to bring us to Christ? Both answers can find support in theological history; but Roman Catholicism has ended by adopting St. Thomas, the Christian Aristotle, as its chief Doctor; and Dean Inge, at any rate, can interpret Cambridge Platonism as an episode not isolated but illustrative of Christian Humanism. In our own day, theologians have, with varying degrees of tact and judgement, turned to their purpose such contending philosophies as those of Hegel, William James, Bergson, and Whitehead.

In his *The Challenge of Humanism*, Professor Mercier has ably expounded the scholastic doctrine of Natural Religion: even without revelation, man's reason and conscience can lead him *toward* God and the Church. Faith does not contradict, but supplements and completes, the findings of reason. Worldliness is the enemy of Christianity; but there is a "wisdom of this world", a secular *sagesse*, which proceeds from candour and thoughtfulness, and which, like

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* VITAL CONTROL *by Lynn Harold Hough* (ABINGDON PRESS. 260 pp. $2.00)

Arnold's Marcus Aurelius, stretches out its arms for something beyond.

Mercier's book applies itself to "reconciling" Aquinas and Irving Babbitt, the great Doctor Gentilium of our day. The force of his work depends on no handful of proof texts (which, themselves, require to be interpreted by the whole mass and nisus of Babbitt's volumes). That the Cambridge Humanist, at the end of his life, avowed, "I range myself unhesitatingly on the side of the supernaturalists", is interesting and significant; but "supernaturalism" itself requires definition; and the biographical fact that Babbitt was, or was not, himself a theist (over which there may well be difference of opinion) is less important than the fact that many of Babbitt's disciples were already Christian and Churchmen who found in his "wisdom" the secular and philosophical equivalent of their faith, that two of his ablest friends and fellow-humanists, P. E. More and T. S. Eliot, have passed, from what they regard as a half-way position, to Anglo-Catholic Humanism, that—in short—some distinguished supernaturalists have ranged themselves on Mr. Babbitt's side.

*Vital Control* is, one may say, intended to perform for the Methodist intelligentsia the service *The Challenge of Humanism* has performed for a similar group in the Roman Catholic communion. Dr. Hough is an Erasmian, well-read, cultivated, and conciliatory of temper. He wishes to bring peace, not a sword; or, at any rate, seeing the large array of intellects, atheist and naturalist, opposing Christianity or disparaging it by contemptuous silence, he wishes to bring into friendly rapport all those contemporary minds to which culture and religion are compatibles, to which, indeed, *civilization* is just such a composite.

Hough's temper is different from Babbitt's; and the temperamental disparity gives the book a flavour to which readers of *Rousseau and Romanticism* will be unaccustomed. Babbitt was an Athanasius *contra mundum*, alert to detect deviations from orthodoxy, pained by defections, scrupulous in his examination, and dismissal, of rival doctrines purporting to be "humanism". Sherman, Lippmann, Brownell, Santayana—all were tainted and to be "read with caution". As he faced contemporary thought, he was (and doubtless in the main correctly) suspicious of alleged approximations to his position. "When first principles are involved the law of measure is no longer applicable. One should not be moderate in dealing with error." One must not confound the humanist with the compromiser or the Laodicean. And with the good-humoured indifference which currently passes for tolerance, with the view that there is "good in all the churches", or the pious doggerel about the good in the worst of us and the bad in the best of us, he was markedly unsympathetic. For him, the world burned steadily in the conflagration of modernism; and the time was not propitious to amenities.

Babbitt's concern was with "first principles" and distinctions. Yet not every spirit feels himself either equipped or courageous enough for service "at the front". In principle, at least, Babbitt would have admitted that there were many ways of serving the Cause. As the editor of *Humanism in America* remarks of his contributors: "In consequnce of a diversity in occupations, as well as in temperament and personality, the authors of the book display numerous divergencies in outlook, in emphasis, and especially in tone . . . ; some of them seek the way of quiet firmness or 'sweet reasonableness', even in this blatant age, while others conceive that modern excesses must be

> 'Scorch'd by a flaming speech of moderation' ".

Hough would be sweetly reasonable, liberal rather than scrupulous in his orthodoxy. Into the same volume with his essay on Babbitt, he brings not only More (who surely belongs there, and who, a Christian, might, indeed, be expected to take the leading rôle), but the Methodist "personalists", Knudson and McConnell, along with C. E. Montague, Bevan, T. R. Glover, and others. An essay on Gamaliel Bradford, while ultimately pronouncing him deficient in the "luminous and permanent standards" of the humanists, certainly takes its subject too much at his own over-favourable valuation of his work, and would have struck Babbitt as insufficiently critical.

Indeed Dr. Hough's strength scarcely lies in *criticism.* He lacks astringency and acuteness. This is not to say that he indulgently endorses *in toto* the books he surveys. Conscientiously he offers some abatement to all praise. Even Babbitt comes in for a page and a half of mild castigation—or perhaps one should rather say, Hough expresses at that length his urbane dissent from some of the Master's propositions. He suspects Babbitt of injustice to Wordsworth and Browning, Stoicism, and even Romanticism. If pseudo-classicism be countered by a true classicism, may one not say that there is possible a "true and sane romanticism"? But Dr. Hough's heart is palpably not in such cavils. He finds appreciative exposition more to his taste than criticism (*i. e.*, judgement operating through the making of distinctions). His book is in effect (what such articles as "Types of Humanism" and "A Shelf of Significant Books" betray it to be) an assembling of reviews and addresses on contemporary literature of the "thoughtful" variety. It suffers from the defects of such a collection: diffuseness, the repetition of the same quotations, style insufficiently laboured. It lacks that dominance of the *end* and the *whole*, that *drive* of argument, which characterizes Mercier's book.

With Hough's plea for a "comprehensive scholarship", that academic humanism so brilliantly expounded in *Literature and the American College*, every reader of THE AMERICAN REVIEW will feel in accord. Mind knows no ultimate distinctions into "departments" of knowledge; and what God hath joined together let no specialist presume to put asunder.

AUSTIN WARREN

## Class War*

THE reviewer lays down this little book with mixed feelings, not altogether unlike those of the legendary but immortal French lawyer who when summoned by the judge to state his facts, replied: "Monsieur le Juge, I have no facts, but I am full of conflicting emotions." He hopes, however, that a waggish reader

* CHRISTIANITY AND CLASS WAR *by Nicholas Berdyaev* (SHEED & WARD. 123 pp. $1.50)

may conclude that some conflict of emotions is not altogether out of place in dealing with the widespread conflict known as Class War.

But to the elements of the mixture: in general the reviewer loves and reveres the Eastern Orthodox Church of which Berdyaev is a deservedly honoured member; its heroic fidelity to tradition, its joyful mysticism, above all its age-long constancy under persecution, all move him profoundly. And in particular he admires Berdyaev, holding his growing influence to be both significant and desirable. The author of *The End of Our Time* with its massive generalization "Where there is no God there is no man"—only the Human Beast so familiar to those condemned to read Zola and his unhappy American followers of today—this author, I say, deserves all respect. Naturally Berdyaev is on the side of the Angels as against the murderous Jewish nonsense of Marx whose real name was Mordecai. Still another point is that he is converted from Marxism; the mental processes of converts are almost always interesting. Moreover the book is full of good things; for instance it emphasizes the important point that many of our present evils flow from the undue concessions made to the middle class by the nineteenth-century aristocrats.

Nevertheless one must regretfully insist that the book is not altogether satisfactory. The text is not clear as to what constitutes war, and nowhere discusses how far it is legitimate. The author's intellectual baggage—or, since we are writing of war, shall we say intellectual knapsack?—is not too well packed; besides a lingering respect for Mordecai-Marx it also contains not a little German trash, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, etc. A little more Aristotle would do him a world of good. Worse yet, he wobbles badly as to what constitutes a social class; one looks in vain for clear and satisfactory definitions of an aristocracy, a middle class, or a proletariat. Let us grant that this is a job to daunt the stoutest heart; unfortunately it is one which he who would discuss class war must tackle.

For instance, Berdyaev calls the middle-class man by the familiar French term "bourgeois". But what is a bourgeois? Originally he was a townsman, a man not noble, living in a "burgus", a piece of low-latin camp slang meaning "a fortified post" and secondarily a town. As such he was distinguished on the one hand from the noble, usually a land proprietor and always one whose reason for being was to fight, keep order, and govern, and on the other hand from the peasant who lived in a "pagus" or "pais", *i.e.*, a countryside, and worked on the land. The idea of a townsman as a middle-class man, intermediate in wealth and social status between the noble and the peasant, gained ground very slowly; there can hardly ever have been a time when there were not some townies richer than many nobles and other townies poorer than many peasants. Now who is or is not a middle-class man? He who is engaged in gainful labour, but of a mental sort as opposed to the hand labour of the peasant or artisan? Or he whose mental labour is confined to trade and to the executive direction of manufacture? Shall we concentrate upon motive, and say that the middle-class man is one whose motive is economic, *i.e.*, acquisitive? Or is he anyone who owns productive capital? In that case, how about the peasant?

Again shall we take the important test of social distinction? Are the middle class those who own productive capital but are not rich enough to render them distinguished? Or those who own but whose manners are not yet those of the "leaders of society"? Clearly, any one of the foregoing tests may sprout a whole jungle of confusions, and none of them enables us to classify a society such as that of the United States, not to speak of Western or Central Europe. For the moment I confine myself to stating the difficulty without attempting to solve it. But Berdyaev does not even state it.

Similar confusions appear in our author's treatment of aristocracy and proletarianism. He stresses unduly the hereditary element in aristocracies, neglecting the enormously important factor of aristocratic training, the inculcation of the gentleman's intolerant code of honour and courage, in short of the military virtues needed for the preservation of physical order in society. Nor does he discuss the process of recruitment and excretion normal to healthy aristocracies. Again, he clings to the socialist idea that *because* of his poverty and insecurity the proletarian is spiritually better than other men; whereas no sensible man can neglect the obvious fact that, to some extent, poverty is due to the irresponsibility, the want of frugality and intelligent industry among the poor. Because the nineteenth century overworked this harsh truth is no reason for denying it today. And what on earth are we to make of Berdyaev's saying that "the bourgeois betrayed the working people for, issuing from their midst, he soon showed greater enterprise and energy"!!! How in the name of tommyrot could the admirable qualities of enterprise and energy, by themselves, betray anyone? One hopes that in this sentence our author has himself been betrayed by his translator.

A logical consequence of the book's insufficiencies of definition is its insufficiency of remedies. The reviewer enthusiastically agrees that the heart of any society is its religion; in season and out, he has repeated that a renewal of faith would inspire the re-ordering of our present turmoil. But he would insist that just as an organism needs other healthy members besides its heart, so a healthy society needs not only religion but also intelligently directed secular virtues. Berdyaev's idea of a "spiritual aristocracy" would seem very doubtful; if we are to take the word spiritual in a purely religious sense, then one suspects that anyone who willingly consented to be classed with such an "aristocracy" might be damned deep in Hell for spiritual pride. From great Byzantium to the Atlantic, the Christian Middle Ages did not confine themselves to preaching economic and other virtues; they preached incessantly, but they also took pains to establish customs and institutions favourable to those virtues. Everywhere they made it easy for the trader, *i.e.*, the business man, to keep his money-making within the bounds of good social order; and this they did by canalizing him in a system built of guilds, standards of quality, and the Just Price. The slipperiest trader of all, the money-lender or banker, they watched with an especially suspicious eye, forbidding as usury the taking of any interest upon unproductive loans. After our own fashion, and under our different conditions, we of twentieth-century Christendom must retrace their road.

Meanwhile, instead of proposing a spiritual aristocracy, let us consider how we might use the peculiar virtues of the middle class, for virtue is never so abundant but what, wherever it exists, it must be used for all it is worth. A social order is like a shell fish: when its spiritual principle dies it leaves behind a hard crust of traditions and habits within which a new principle, like the Hermit Crab, may take shelter until the new society is itself surrounded with the armour of new traditions. So Augustus, founding the Empire, deliberately preserved every fragment of the Republic that looked as if it might stand the weather; so the Middle Ages laboured to save all that could be saved of the old Imperial order; so Mussolini gave the watchword: "Strengthen all the hierarchies." As the master of society, the middle man has failed:

> On every shore his wrecks are strewn. . . .

He must and will be replaced. But will anyone say that the typical middle-class virtues of modest but resolute independence based upon rigid thrift have lost their meaning? If so he must be a twentieth-century Rip Van Winkle. In countries like France, where most of the population save and therefore own, the social order is impregnable; that the French have survived sixty-three years of misgovernment by the parliamentary Third Republic speaks for itself. Let other people take notice; they need not be proletarian unless they choose.

Finally what is the portion of labour, the hierarchy of work? Irving Babbitt's analysis can hardly be bettered. That physical work is necessary and undeserving of contempt he does not trouble to state, probably because such statements are so constantly made; we do not despise the shoes which keep our feet from the mud. But mental work, he insists, is higher in the human scale and merits greater material rewards, for most people (although able and willing to do at least a little physical work) recoil in horror from the labour of thinking. Highest of all is spiritual work, that of people who really exercise their ethical will toward doing right and avoiding wrong. At this point, however, we leave Babbitt, doing so reverently as Dante in Purgatory left his master Virgil.

Spiritual work may take one of two related but by no means identical forms: that toward secular or religious virtue. If by a spiritual aristocracy we mean a class dominated not by desire for material gain but by their instinct for order, and especially to the courage by which alone can order be preserved, gentlemen who govern and fight, then the term may stand. Nor is it impossible that the reverence and the material rewards which he once enjoyed may again be laid at the feet of the soldier. But on the religious side the Church has always maintained that spiritual effort is equally necessary on every social level, that God alone knew the names of the saved and the lost, and that her priests and bishops up to the highest patriarchs were as likely to sin as the humblest layman. Far above mere ecclesiastical dignities, she has known her saints by their humility.

HOFFMAN NICKERSON

# EDITORIAL NOTES

## The American Review's First Year

THE passage of a year of THE AMERICAN REVIEW, and the beginning with this issue of a second year, invite an editorial glance at the work accomplished and the work still to be done. The magazine was founded as an experiment in securing co-operation between a number of groups and individuals none of whom has had a regular organ of expression in this country before, and all of whom represent in differing ways a single general direction in contemporary thought. The prospective contributors were described in our first issue as being "radically critical of conditions in the modern world, but launching their criticism from a 'traditionalist' basis: from the basis of a firm grasp on the immense body of experience accumulated by men in the past, and the insight which this knowledge affords". Other descriptive phrases applied to our contributors were "radicals of the Right" and "Revolutionary Conservatives". In other words, what was intended was a Right-Wing miscellany to undertake the unique task of presenting the opposition to the well-nigh universal liberalism, radicalism, and false conservatism of our organs of opinion.

That such a periodical was needed was obvious, and the need has not grown less with the passage of a year; on the contrary it is obvious that the bulk of the work is still to do and will be a long time in the doing. But that THE AMERICAN REVIEW is performing acceptably a needed task is clear both from its steady increase in circulation and from the letters coming from readers over the country who have met with it in one way or another and write to express their approval and gratitude. The gratitude, of course, is due our contributors, who have responded generously and energetically to the invitation to join in the venture, consenting to overlook the fact that they often appear shoulder-to-shoulder with writers with whom they would much rather argue than seem to be in full agreement.

*Economics*. Problems of economics have naturally bulked large in the first year of THE AMERICAN REVIEW, and are likely to do so for a long time to come. The economic views of a number of the REVIEW's most frequent contributors are ably summed up in the article by Mr. Herbert Agar which begins this issue, "The Task for Conservatism". The central doctrines, which have found expression in every issue, are the necessity of restoring small and widely held property if we are to restore liberty to our society, and the urgency of setting the power of the people through its government above the power of the plutocratic régime which has brought us to chaos and to the threat of the orderly but servile refuge of collectivism.

A more extended treatment of the same theme, with some practical suggestions of method, was furnished by Hilaire Belloc in his series "The Restoration of Property" which ran through the first six issues of the magazine. Mr. Belloc is probably the chief source, in the English language at any rate, of the economic programme which several AMERICAN REVIEW contributors, and an increasing number of individuals both in England and in this country, consider the only possible alternative to Communism. An editorial note on Mr. Belloc's economic work, and that of G. K. Chesterton and others of the "Distributist" group, appeared in the November issue.

Mr. Agar—who is an American now resident in England, where he is the literary editor of the *English Review*—published last year a brilliant study of American history, *The People's Choice*, reviewed by Allen Tate in the December issue. His historical knowledge makes him especially useful in interpreting the Distributist programme in American terms.

There is but a brief reference in Mr. Agar's article to the problem of agriculture, which has received special emphasis from the magazine's steady contributors the Southern Agrarians: among them John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Frank L. Owsley, Andrew Nelson Lytle, John Gould Fletcher, John Donald Wade, Robert Penn Warren. Those who see a system of small property as the only alternative to a system of no property—collectivism—inevitably come to see farming as the clue to its establishment; and those whose sympathies are attracted to the agrarian way of life are inevitably led to extend the idea of property to the whole of society. Both parties are saying the same thing with different emphasis, and together form a solid block of opinion, if not the only such block, against both Capitalism and Communism. . . . The longest discussion of Agrarianism has been Mr. Ransom's *Happy Farmers* (October).

Some economic points supplementary to Mr. Agar's article will be found in Mr. Robbins's "The Age of Fans", in this issue. Mr. Robbins, who is one of the English Distributists—of the "Left-Wing" branch, at Birmingham—combines points of doctrine with an imaginative grappling with the mood that has begotten Capitalism and is begetting Communism; and it is this mood, this atmosphere, this thick emotional fog, which must be somehow penetrated before alternative ideas can even be heard. Mr. Chesterton has long devoted his unsurpassed rhetorical gifts to just this end; and THE AMERICAN REVIEW's first issue was privileged to publish one of his finest efforts of the kind, "The Day of the Lord". The same attack on the prevailing mood by means of satire was made by Allen Tate in his "Unemployment: A Modest Proposal" (May), and by Gregory MacDonald in his "Mr. Selfridge's Solution" (December). A non-satirical but similarly indirect approach to the problem of breaking through the barrier of atmosphere was made by Father Vincent McNabb, the Dominican scholar and ally of the Distributists, in "The Tyranny of Tokens" (Summer issue).

Mr. Robbins touches on one point of special value, hitherto not much emphasized here but calling for persistent attention in the future: namely, that the attempt to preserve our productive system in its present form and to make it produce and get its products distributed, will inevitably lead to slavery. As he points out, this is the attempt being made by most of the vocal economic groups: "Communism, Rationalization, Technocracy, Social Credit. . . ." He might have added the New Deal. He did add Fascism; but this will be taken up in a moment.

Not all of the AMERICAN REVIEW contributors agree with the economic programme sketched above. Mr. Hoffman Nickerson, for instance, who follows "the great Belloc", as he calls him, in most things, does not follow him in economics, and is apparently content with the wage-system; though far from content with the whole of our present economy, as he has shown in his book *The American Rich*. He has not written specifically of economics in this magazine (except glancingly in a review in this issue), and I am stating his views from his conversational remarks; it is hoped that in the near future he will favour us with his criticism of the Distributist-Agrarian position.

Mr. Nickerson is here allied with another AMERICAN REVIEW group: the Humanists. While passages condemning most of the ills of capitalism may be found in the work of Paul Elmer More and of the late Irving Babbitt, they have been less than wholeheartedly critical of it. The weight of their criticism in economics has gone rather into exposing the diseased psychology and morality of the humanitarian cure for Capitalism: Marxianism and its near-relatives. Thus far the Humanists have not presented an extended application of their ethical and political views to the field of economics–and there is no need for them to do so. But if Mr. More or Mr. Shafer or Mr. Nickerson or another cares to make such a contribution, THE AMERICAN REVIEW is eager to publish it. The result would, I suspect, include some fireworks; but fireworks are an excellent source of illumination.

In his article "Outside the Protestant Garrison", Father McGowan, Assistant Director of the Department of Social Action, National Catholic Welfare Conference, touches on more topics than economics, but his central thesis is one that affects the heart of the matter; namely, that it was the ethics of Calvinism that provided the driving force of Capitalism, and only as we overcome this can we recover. The article to which he is replying, by Mr. R. L. Burgess of Palo Alto, was a stimulating discussion of the relations of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in our society. Mr. Burgess urged the Protestant majority to think and speak realistically of their religious origin and that of their non-Protestant neighbours, and to come out boldly in behalf of their tradition—not intimidated by such excrescences as the Klan—against the valuable but different traditions of Catholics and Jews. He favoured the "Liberal Pragmatism" of Protestantism, "tentative, experimental, pluralistic", over the dogmatism, absolutism, or monism of the other groups.

Mr. Burgess's discussion of Catholics took him over several points of politics and economics on which Father McGowan comments. My own opinion is that Father McGowan has decidedly the better of the argument. Mr. Burgess, I fear, is so much the "honest Liberal", as he states, that he is running the danger of letting the genuine Protestant virtues be lost in a haze of blur and indecision; the Protestant virtues, or at least the formulas in which they are expressed, need a careful overhauling if they are to carry their usefulness into the times that are upon us. I should say, in fact, that we Protestants and Post-Protestants can only preserve our hegemony by making haste to steal a large quantity of the rich secular wisdom, the profound thinking in ethics, in politics, economics, philosophy in general, which Catholicism has amassed in these many centuries. Father McGowan's discussion of Capitalist psychology is a case in point; not the less valuable because he emphasizes—as is too rarely done—the extent to which Catholics have succumbed to the Calvinist poison and fallen in with the Capitalist ethics. He is, I think, right in being hopeful that both Catholics and Protestants will unite in forming a corporate society on the ruins of Puritanism; or if he is not right, I do not see how our society can be preserved in any form that either a Protestant or a Catholic could think bearable.

*Politics.* The question of politics resolves itself, broadly, into a discussion of the succession of Fascism to parliamentarianism; or at least some form of authoritarian government supplanting pluto-democracy, and Fascism seems the most convenient word, in spite of ambiguities. Communism, at any rate, is no longer a practical political issue outside of Russia, except as a stimulant to Fascism; and in Russia it likewise hastens the advent of Fascism by weakening capitalism through competition in exports, and through acting as a solvent on Capitalist imperialism in the East.

The only political question of consequence today, then, is "What is Fascism?" To this question there are various answers, and in particular three:

(1) Fascism is the "last stand", brutal and ruthless, of Capitalism and imperialism.

(2) Fascism is merely collectivism in a non-Marxian form.

(3) Fascism betokens the revival of monarchy, property, the guilds, the security of the family and the peasantry, and the ancient ways of European life.

The issue is complicated by the fact that undoubtedly all three elements exist in every Fascist régime so far established. The question becomes, therefore, which element is the essential one.

The Marxists, of course, insist on the first one, since it is the only one that fits their diagnosis and terminology. Among our contributors, opinions differ. Mr. Harold Goad's study of "The Corporate State" in the first issue adopted the more hopeful interpretation, the third. Mr. W. E. D. Allen's "The Fascist Idea in Britain" (January) was similar. In my editorial notes last May ("The Revival of Monarchy") I also defended the third position.

In this issue Mr. Robbins, in linking Fascism with those other movements that are clearly making for the servile state, adopts the second theory. From his quotations it is obvious that Sir Oswald Mosley is, indeed, merely a non-Marxian collectivist; and the question arises whether he is entitled to the name of Fascist. But as I have said, all three of the prevalent interpretations are in part borne out by the facts, and the question of relative strength is one that will occupy future pages of THE AMERICAN REVIEW; as it will occupy, and indeed dominate, the pages of history in the next few years.

In his references to Fascism Father McGowan characterizes it in a fashion different from any of those mentioned. For him, as for other Catholics, *state absolutism* is the essence of Fascism. I do not see how this can be proposed as a major theory of Fascism; I should say it was rather a danger to which Fascism was especially subject. To hold that an improper attitude toward the relations of state and individual, of state and church, is the *essence* of a movement as powerful and varied as Fascism seems to me inadequate. It is as though one were to take the German example and say that the essence of

Fascism is the mutilation of paupers according to a professor's notion of what their children will be. And one has only to point to Austria—and for that matter, to Poland and Ireland—to find grounds for rejecting the theory of absolutism.

As Father McGowan says, what we are being led by is "the idea of self-governing and organized production and service functioning under some kind of finally sovereign government". A "finally sovereign government" is of course precisely what we have not had these many years. It is not likely that this will be established at once in perfect proportions, any more than it is likely that the man who can make the change will be the balanced casuist of delicate moral issues as well as the man of action. It could be urged that Father McGowan's view mistakes an accident of revolution for the essence of the revolutionary programme. In any case, an exaggeration toward *étatisme* would seem to be venial after pluto-democracy.

*Irving Babbitt.* Professor Babbitt was too ill to contribute to THE AMERICAN REVIEW before his lamented death last summer, but if the editorial intention has succeeded, his spirit has been evident in every issue. Indeed, the magazine owes its existence primarily to his work, and one of its main aims will always be to provide a living memorial to his great mind and heart.

At the same time, it is certain that much has appeared in these pages and will appear in the future with which Babbitt would have disagreed, probably with scorn. I imagine the predominant economic views, for instance, would have seemed to him "romantic", if not downright humanitarian. At least I have heard him pronounce Mr. Chesterton and Mr.

Ransom to be romantics. But then, even his friend Dr. More fell, for him, into errors of romanticism.

As Dr. More's memorial essay suggests, there are few subjects which the mention of Babbitt does not bring into the foreground. He built such a massive edifice of powerful thought and wide-ranging study, cut deeply and freshly into so many of the most urgent problems, that a magazine would have a fully rounded programme if it devoted itself to discussing and adding to his work. In large part, indeed, that might be said to be the programme of THE AMERICAN REVIEW. His work in education, for instance, has found application in studies by two of his followers, Norman Foerster's discussion of "progressive" education, "Education Leads the Way" (September), and G. R. Elliott's two essays on the small college (October and November). His interest in the French writers whose work in some ways paralleled his own will shortly be reflected in critical estimations of Maurras, Lasserre, and others.

*Conclusion.* This hasty sketch of some of the work done by THE AMERICAN REVIEW in its first year is far from complete, and indeed omits much of the most important contents, notably the numerous studies of literary figures. Articles have appeared on Communism, regionalism, the relation of science and religion, the Negro problem, warfare, history, and so on, not to mention the numerous topics passed under observation in the reviews of books. But perhaps this sketch will serve to remind the magazine's followers of what has come into their hands during the year, and give to new readers an idea of the magazine's purposes and scope.

That the work so far done is not ephemeral is indicated by the large number of requests received for back issues and for complete files, as new readers become acquainted with the magazine and find its point of view congenial—or stimulatingly antipathetic. Indeed it might be charged that the magazine has not been ephemeral enough; has not, that is, devoted sufficient space to current topics and illustrated its position in relation to the news of the day, as the word "review" in its title would seem to promise. This charge would be justified, and to a certain extent will be corrected in the future. The journalistic advantages of current comment are obvious, in stimulating livelier interest and reaching a larger public. But in this first year, and still for some time to come, it has seemed desirable to devote the limited space to making as clear as possible the principles activating our main body of contributors, even at the cost of a certain heaviness. The points of view represented in the magazine are for the most part not only unpopular with the reading public, but unfamiliar. When the ideas have been expounded beyond mistake in their doctrinal form, then they can more readily be illustrated in action, as it were, and presented with a wider audience in view.

In the meantime, readers who are sympathetic with the aims of THE AMERICAN REVIEW are urged to remember that a minority organ has an up-hill struggle to reach even its clearly destined audience. If appreciation and interest occasionally take the form of finding a new reader for the magazine, its effectiveness will be greatly increased and its continuity assured.

S. C.